CRISIS PERCEPTIONS, FAN BEHAVIORS, AND EGOCENTRIC DISCUSSION NETWORKS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPERVIOUS NATURE OF NFL CRISES

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ABSTRACT

JENNIFER L. HARKER: Crisis Perceptions, Fan Behaviors, and Egocentric Discussion Networks: An Investigation into the Impervious Nature of NFL Crises
(Under the direction of Adam J. Saffer, Ph.D.)

This dissertation uniquely measured stakeholders' perceptions of crisis, and the affective and behavioral outcomes of those perceptions. More specifically, sport identification, fan behaviors, and egocentric discussion network analyses were all situated within the framework of situational crisis communication theory to explore the ways in which individuals react to and communicate perceptions concerning sport crises.

Stakeholders' perceptions were divided into two categories, crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, and tested for associations with sport identification and the activation of several fan behaviors. This dissertation captured stakeholders' perceptions regarding four crises involving the National Football League (NFL) among the three structural levels of the NFL organization: the league as a whole entity, the team as an organization, and athlete as individual. Each crisis, by level of attribution, was then explored in tandem with the sport-specific measurements of sport identification and the activation of fan behaviors.

Sport identification was uniquely examined in this dissertation as a relational history with sport entities and actors, and was tested as a predictive antecedent to stakeholders' perceptions. Sport identification was tested for its predictive power over stakeholders' perceptions and for its driving force behind the activation of fan behaviors. Several fan behaviors, including CORFing, Blasting, and Schadenfreude, were examined for their role in the psychological and behavioral

image management attempts in response to general sport outcomes and in response to sport crises.

Findings indicate that sport identification is indeed a predictive element of stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport crises, as well as an activating factor of fan behaviors in response to both general sport outcomes and in response to sport crises. However, sport identification tracks in an interesting new direction different than originally hypothesized within this research. As a result, this dissertation extended current knowledge and furthers current theory, method, and practice across the crisis communication, sport public relations, and the network perspective bodies of literatures. Exciting new directions are paved by this dissertation for future sport crisis communication research, including the application of fan behaviors as crisis outcomes and the calibrating propensity of identification.

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In pure identification there would be no strife. Likewise, there would be no strife in absolute separateness, since opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing the first condition necessary for their interchange of blows. But put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric.”

—Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1969, p. 25

DEDICATION

Every achievement related to the completion of this dissertation and doctoral degree is directly because of my beautiful and loving family. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

To my loving, supportive hubby, this is *our* achievement. Thank you for doing the laundry, cooking the meals, and wiping my tears away when things felt more difficult than I could tackle. You are the greatest dad to our children. I am eternally grateful for you.

To my momma, thank you for your undying support through literally every year of my entire life. I thank God for you every day and I am so grateful for your love and forgiveness. Thank you for always being my biggest cheerleader.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public relations is better defined by what it does than what it is (Hopwood, Skinner, & Kitchin, 2010; L'Etang, 2013). Public relations is the ongoing management of communication, reputation, and relationship-building that furthers the interests of the entity being represented (L'Etang, 2013). Public relations practitioners build relationships by communicating and listening to the public in an effort to maintain a positive reputation. Reputation is a perception-based construct (Walker, 2010), best explained by Hopwood et al., (2010) as, "everything you do, everything you say and everything anyone else says or thinks about you" (p. 17). Reputations are challenged during times of crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), which are sudden, unexpected negatively perceived events (Coombs, 2007a). Researchers often begin by assessing the wrongdoing that triggered a crisis and what the entities and actors experiencing the crisis said, but more rarely study the public's perceptions of the entities and the entities' evolving reputations (Avery, Lariscy, Kim, & Hocke, 2010; Ha & Boynton, 2014). This dissertation begins by examining the public's perception of entities and actors at the center of a crisis and does so by applying a unique method to study the communication of those perceptions.

Traditionally, public relations scholars use one of two theoretical frameworks for studying crisis. One is image repair theory (Benoit, 2015), a theoretical and rhetorical lens to decipher the application of crisis remediation strategies. Retrospective case studies of individual crisis situations often use this framework to identify the strategies a communicator used in self-

defense following a crisis. To truly understand crises and perceptions of crises, a more robust framework is necessary. Image repair theory is limited by its one-way communication structure and lacks inclusion and measurement of public perceptions. These limitations do not lead to a complete assessment of reputation following crisis remediation.

Situational crisis communication theory offers a more comprehensive theoretical framework that is empirically focused, practitioner-applied, and is situational in its crisis communication typology (Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 2004, 1998, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2008, 2006, 2002, 1996). This theory matches common organizational crisis types with ten remediation strategies that are prescribed to help correct the wrongdoing (Coombs, 1995). Broadly, this theory encompasses an organizational crisis communication approach for crisis response. For example, Cooley and Cooley (2011) examined the General Motors bankruptcy using situational crisis communication theory and found the organization's public relations practitioners applied justification and excuse strategies most often when defending General Motors' reputation during that time period. The authors categorized the General Motors financial crisis as preventable, which suggests a higher attribution of responsibility.

Beyond looking at the crisis types and the response strategies, situational crisis communication theory draws from attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985) to understand the ways a public (or publics) attribute crisis responsibility in response to a perceived wrongdoing (i.e. crisis event). With an interest toward remediating a crisis, the theory explains how attribution of responsibility can be reduced and an organization can maintain its reputation. Coombs (2007a) notes that adjusting information for both physical and emotional direction or redirection is critical to crisis management and when conveyed appropriately helps to reduce attribution. Therefore, the public must accept the adjusting information, which can include

corrective action, in order for the remediation attempt to be successful (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). When the remediation attempt is not acceptable, crisis increases in severity because of negative stakeholders' perceptions (Coombs & Holladay, 2009).

A stakeholder is any person or group that holds some connected interest with the entity enduring a crisis (Ulmer, 2001). Stakeholders can include other organizations, governmental agencies, the media, and any individual connected or among the general public adjacent to the organization, just to name a few examples (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). A centerpiece of situational crisis communication theory provides guidance for the assessment of stakeholders' perceptions of reputation. Coombs (2007a) explained that the ultimate outcome in a crisis is for the organization's reputation to remain intact. Recall that reputation is a perception-based construct. It is here that this dissertation is situated.

Reputational assessment through stakeholders' perceptions is a critical component of crisis remediation and is an underutilized portion of situational crisis communication theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2008, 2006). According to situational crisis communication theory, three stakeholders' perceptions can threaten an organization's reputation in a crisis (Coombs, 2007a): *perceived responsibility* (attribution, amount of blame, or amount of evidence), *crisis history* (is the crisis a one-time event or one in a crisis saga), and *assessment of relational history*. For example, the more a stakeholder believes an organization is responsible for the wrongdoing, which can be multiplied by the wrongdoing occurring more than once (i.e. crisis history), the lower the resultant reputational assessment (Coombs, 1995). However, generally speaking, a prior positive reputation can serve as a buffer when a crisis occurs, thus reducing anger and blame (Coombs, 2007a), but that is not always the case (Sohn & Lariscy, 2012) across all experiments testing for buffers. Still, the literature needs an in-depth understanding of what other

factors might influence stakeholders' perceptions and one understudied factor in the current literature is a stakeholder's prior relationship to an organization. This dissertation argues that prior relationship to an organization or actors connected to the organization might play a key role in the way perceptions of the organization and its response to crises are constructed.

Crisis perceptions are buffered by overall experiences and personal connectedness to the entity experiencing the crisis (Coombs, 2007a). A buffer can be conceptualized as a "pre-existing factor that could influence" the perceptions around a crisis (Koerber & Zabara, 2017, p. 194). Buffers result in less serious crisis perceptions because of emotional or proximal perceived connections (Koerber & Zabara, 2017). In other words, an individual interprets a crisis via a kaleidoscope of perceptions and those perceptions shape attribution and reputational measurement. The culmination of stakeholders' perceptions of past experiences, reputational assessment, and crisis attribution are as unique as the individual assessing the crisis. For example, reaching back to Cooley and Cooley's (2011) research on the General Motors financial crisis, the bankruptcy might be perceived as a relief to some internal stakeholders because of the protections bankruptcy can offer. Other external stakeholders, especially those General Motors was indebted to, view the crisis much more negatively. For this reason, personal identification with the entity should be measured because such perspective can play a key role in perception (Coombs & Holladay, 2006).

Stakeholders' perceptions, generally speaking, run along a continuum from negative to positive. Positive perceptions of crisis events are not studied in the crisis communication literature. In fact, for some it may seem counter to traditional crisis research. Yet, it is argued here, that such exploration is important to consider especially when weighing Coombs' assessment factors for reputational threats. Not all stakeholders will negatively perceive or

attribute responsibility on an entity enduring a crisis. There are crises that could be perceived as valuable or positive, depending upon a person's individual perception or identity.

Identification occurs at the individual and group or social levels (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and can vary in intensity and duration. Identification can spur cognitive, emotional (or affective), and behavioral outcomes (Brown, 2015; Moyer-Guse, 2015). Identification is one way this dissertation will explore this understudied phenomenon in crisis communication. Coombs' situational crisis communication theory nods to identification within the third of these assessment factors of crisis perceptions: past reputation and relationship [i.e. relational history] (Coombs, 2007a). Identification in relation to that factor has not yet been reviewed in depth in crisis research, and the pairing of identification with sport and crisis perceptions has not yet been examined.

This dissertation applies these concepts of crisis perceptions and identification to crisis situations within the context of sport. Sport entities face similar crises as other types of organizations but sport offers heightened perceptions because of identification (Kruse, 1981). For example, research on connectedness to sport spans a continuum of identification levels from the psychology of self to social identity (Kruse, 1977, 1981; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Put another way, a person who highly identifies her/himself with sport is considered a sports fan (fanship), and those who highly identify with other sport fans of say, a particular sport team, consider themselves to be among that family of fans (fandom). By taking a multileveled approach, this dissertation research examines the individual identification (fanship) and the social identification (fandom) considerations of sport connectedness through identification—both team identification and social identification. Identification leads to involvement and the combination results in affective and behavioral

outcomes. In sport, specifically, those outcomes include an array of fan behaviors (Spinda, 2011).

As stated above, by beginning with an examination of fan and nonfan perceptions of sport-related crises, the pairing with fan behaviors provides a nuanced view into how fans convey their reactions to crisis scenarios. For example, this dissertation examines whether a crisis involving a rival team makes a fan feel as joyful as when that rival team loses a game (Billings, Qiao, Brown, & Devlin, 2017; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Havard, 2014). Such exploration of fan behaviors allows for the examination of how crises are perceived and whether and how those perceptions might mirror or differ in general sport-related outcomes and subsequent behaviors. In other words, rival fans may blast each other, or "trash talk" following a favorable or unfavorable game matchup (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011). Such a phenomenon brings up several empirical questions: Do fans enact similar behaviors during a sport-related crisis involving a rival team? Moreover, are the same behaviors occurring amongst fans of a team who experience a team-related crisis as has been researched among fans following the loss of a game to a rival team? An assessment of similarities between these game-related fan behaviors and sport-related crises behaviors might be similar. If so, results could inform researchers and practitioners of sport crisis communication on the ways sport crises are perceived similarly or differently from traditional organizational crises.

The proposed research study expands the application of situational crisis communication theory both theoretically and conceptually, as well as methodologically. By adding a network perspective, this study is situated to consider the ways communication is networked, interconnected, and full of actions, thoughts, and behaviors (Monge & Contractor, 2003). This perspective ties into Coombs' (2007a) postulations that stakeholders' word-of-mouth either aids

in crisis recovery or furthers the reputational threat. Coombs suggested that word-of-mouth, which occurs when stakeholders talk to others about an issue, is among the behavioral outcomes of reputational assessment following a crisis. Analytically, the network perspective can capture stakeholders' word-of-mouth and assess the impact such discussions have on stakeholders' perceptions and behaviors. In other words, people talk about sport with a wide variety of others in their personal networks. By embracing this basic premise of the network perspective and the topic of sport-related crisis, this dissertation will identify those whom stakeholders discuss sport-related crises, why they reach to those certain others for those conversations, and examine what impact such discussion have on crisis perceptions.

This dissertation, therefore, proposes an egocentric network survey to investigate how and with whom people discuss sport and sport-related crises. An egocentric network explores the social network of an individual (Marsden, 1987). A discussion network measures the communicative exchanges among an ego (the individual) and his/her respective alters (i.e. kin, friends, acquaintances, or other fans). An egocentric discussion network in this study will examine the precise ways in which stakeholders communicate with people in their personal networks about sport. Previous ego network studies have studied individuals' discussions about "important matters" (Burt, 1984; Marsden, 1987) "health matters" (Bush, Walker, & Perry, 2017; Perkins, Subramanian, & Christakis, 2015; Perry & Pescosolido, 2010, 2015) and, most recently, "political matters" (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad, McClurg, & Rolfe, 2009). Never before has an egocentric network analysis been conducted solely on sport matters or crisis events. This dissertation fills that gap.

Theory and Conceptual Needs

Taken together, the exploration of situational crisis communication theory, combined with an egocentric discussion network approach, and the levels and activation of several conceptual aspects specific to sport, will provide an in-depth nuanced view of stakeholders' perceptions specific to sport crises. This dissertation fulfills many theoretical and conceptual needs in the crisis communication literature.

Five areas have not yet been measured within sport crisis communication and will be addressed in this dissertation. The first is the focus of stakeholders' perceptions in the application of situational crisis communication theory and the assessment of those perceptions specific to sport. The second is identification with sport at the individual (fanship) and group (fandom) levels and how that identification might impact crisis perceptions. The third is a unique perspective to be explored involving a positively valenced view of crises. The fourth area involves combining word-of-mouth and fan behaviors with sport-related crisis perceptions. Finally, the fifth area of need this dissertation fills is the unique application of an egocentric network analysis in sport and sport crisis communication. Together, these five areas fill gaps in not only the sport and crisis literatures but in the network literature, too.

This dissertation therefore introduces an innovative new method and application of situational crisis communication theory in sport crisis communication by expanding understanding of the affective and behavioral components connected to stakeholders' perceptions specific to sport-related crises.

Purpose of this Dissertation

The connections under the theoretical umbrella of situational crisis communication theory, and the conceptual components of identification and fan behaviors combine for a unique

opportunity for exploration via a network perspective. In so doing, this dissertation connects the psychological perceptions of stakeholders and examines how their behavioral outcomes might differ when asked about sport in general and sport-related crises. This dissertation explores whether individual and group identification shapes stakeholders' perceptions and how fan behaviors are communicated in specific real-life scenarios. The combination of these sport-related concepts and crisis perceptions fills a gap in crisis communication, sport communication, and fan behaviors bodies of literature. In so doing, this research serves to advance theory, method, and practice in crisis communication and sport.

Theoretical contribution. This research extends crisis communication theory by teasing out key understudied and underutilized areas of situational crisis communication theory. The connection of situational crisis communication theory with a network perspective will inform best practices in real life sport-related crisis communication by providing a better understanding of the unique perspectives of stakeholders who both shape and reshape the crisis storyline through word-of-mouth. Pairing the components of theory with several conceptual frameworks specific to sport will aid in a better understanding of theory application to broad subfields. This research will identify stakeholders' levels of individual and social identification through measurement of sport fanship and fandom, and how that identification might act as a relational history that influences stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises.

Methods contribution. Crisis communication is most often examined retrospectively by quantitatively and qualitatively assessing case study examples of reparation strategies (Ha & Riffe, 2015). This dissertation moves one step beyond the typology of a situational crisis and its accompanying remediation strategies, and instead uniquely applies a network perspective. Situational crisis communication theory also will be extended methodologically by adding this

network perspective to the body of literature. Furthermore, this egocentric network analysis will be the first specifically focused on sport matters, and will uniquely build the subfield of sport-related crisis communication as well.

Professional practice contribution. By understanding the nuanced perspectives of stakeholders, crisis remediation attempts can become more precisely targeted for improved reputational assessment and subsequent crisis recovery outcomes. Interpersonal communication exchanges involving fan behaviors will help discern the specific activation of crisis perceptions. As a result, sport crisis practitioners can refocus remediation efforts in targeted ways for differing stakeholder groups. Moreover, practitioners can also learn which interpersonal communicative networks to use in an effort to enhance diffusion of positive word-of-mouth and team or league ambassadorship. In other words, this research will inform the precise ways in which practitioners can activate fan communication with stakeholders for increased remediation outcomes.

In sum, this research examines fan and nonfan perceptions of sport-related crises, the relationships and connections that inform those perceptions, and their resultant behavioral outcomes, to further our collective understanding of crises in sport. A literature review immediately follows this chapter to explain the connections among situational crisis communication theory, identification, and each of the sport-related concepts. The literature review shares an in-depth overview of the network perspective and introduces past research on egocentric network analyses and discussion networks. Chapter two ends with the research questions and hypotheses this innovative research will examine, specifically. Chapter three will explain the method followed to conduct the egocentric discussion network analysis, and the other theoretically and conceptually based measures applied in the survey instrument. Chapter four

will present the results of the egocentric discussion network analysis, and chapter five will offer a full explanatory discussion of those findings. Chapter six will conclude by outlining conclusions that can be drawn, and specific outcomes that can advance situational crisis communication theory, method, and practice, as well as the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how stakeholders' perceptions of crisis are shaped and communicated. A picturesque example of stakeholders' perceptions of a crisis situation in sport, driven by identification and demonstrative of fan behaviors, occurred on February 5, 2017 when Roger Goodell, commissioner of the National Football League (NFL), was so loudly booed at the Super Bowl. That culminating moment was quite the sensationalized end cap to a tumultuous season littered with disagreement between Goodell and the beloved, for some, New England Patriots and star quarterback, Tom Brady. Patriots' fans were angry with Goodell for suspending Brady for four games. Their thunderous boos drowned out the microphones attempting to capture the historic moment of the Lombardi Trophy presentation. Patriots' fans were angry at Goodell's attempts of disciplining their beloved star player for a crisis that claimed the quarterback and team had been cheating during games by deflating footballs. Rival fans alternatively found great joy in Brady's four-game suspension, and the Patriot's fans experienced a considerable amount of blasting, or trash talking, because of the crisis.

Sport offers a heightened environment for the study of crisis because stakeholders are overt fans of sport entities, with high levels of identification. Moreover, stakeholders regularly engage in conversations concerning sport, and negative fan-to-rival communication such as blasting or "trash talking," is not only normalized but even expected (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell,

1999; Havard, 2014; Spinda, 2011). Sport organizations experience similar crises as other organizations, and sport organizations and actors have just as much need to protect or defend reputations as any other entity (Kruse, 1981; L'Etang, 2013, 2006; L'Etang & Hopwood, 2008). This dissertation utilizes crises experienced by the NFL to conceptualize sport-based crises and to study the theoretical relationship among stakeholders' perceptions, identification, fan behaviors, and how people resultantly discuss sport-based crises in their social networks.

Contemporary crisis communication research originates from the one-way dissemination of crisis remediation or self-defense efforts (Coombs & Holladay, 2013; Ware & Linkugel, 1973) from either an individual or an organization's defensive posture (Avery et al., 2010; Benoit, 2015; Coombs, 2004, 1995; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). For example, Ware and Linkugel (1973) examined the rhetorical self-defense of Richard Nixon. They offered the commonly used defensive communication strategies of denial, differentiation, transcendence and bolstering, offered by politicians in response to crisis situations. Benoit (1995) later expanded the four strategies into an expanded and prescriptive theoretical framework for image restoration. Benoit's image repair theory (IRT), as he later named it (2015), has been widely applied to retrospectively assess the rhetorical strategies extended by an entity or actor to remediate crises. In tandem to Benoit's theoretical framework, situational crisis communication theory emerged (Coombs, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Situational crisis communication theory offered prescriptive remediation strategies for organizations to apply to protect or repair reputations during or immediately following a crisis. Such focus on organizations' outward communication only tells half the story, and overlooks the need for crisis communicators "to understand how people are reacting to their crisis messages," (Coombs & Holladay, 2014, p. 42).

Not until 2004 did scholars begin to focus on stakeholders' perceptions. Lee (2004) conducted an experiment to assess perceptions of a plane crash scenario in Hong Kong and revealed that stakeholders' perceptions reached beyond the crisis type and severity of a crisis. Lee instead reasoned that crisis responsibility, the organization's prior reputation, and stakeholders' perceptions are driven by affective responses like sympathy. Until Lee's work on stakeholders' perceptions, "crisis communication research reflected a strong sender orientation," (Coombs & Holladay, 2014, p. 40). Put another way, the research until then had only considered what organizations communicated during or after a crisis.

Merely focusing on an organization's outward communication is limiting. A power structure exists that should be considered because when an organization communicates outwardly, it does not allow for reciprocal dialogue (Leitch & Motion, 2010). Take for example, the increased ability of an organization or a celebrity persona's increased access to mediated channels to amplify messages compared to other less powerful individual stakeholders (Kruse, 1977). In public relations, it is important to consider crises outside of that one-way outward-focused communication, and integrate the public relations components of engagement and dialogue that actually occur alongside crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Heath, 2000; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Leitch & Motion, 2010).

Frandsen and Johansen (2010) argue for an extension of what Heath (2000) best describes as statement and counterstatement in public discourse. In crisis, this is especially applicable because many voices enter the rhetorical arena when there has been a perceived wrongdoing (Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Frandsen & Johansen, 2010). Furthermore, stakeholders have become "increasingly vocal" in response to crises (Coombs, 2014, p. 13), which suggests that stakeholders are activating their discussion networks during crises.

This dissertation therefore investigates crises from the stakeholder's perception, and the stakeholder's resultant interpersonal crisis communication. Stakeholders' perceptions and reactions are ultimately what define the severity of a crisis, and stakeholders' perceptions influence whether the organization recovers from the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, 2008). Whether a crisis assessment is approached from the view of the organization or from the stakeholder's perception, situational crisis communication theory serves as a comprehensive roadmap for crisis research. The theory names specific assessment factors that are threats to the organization's reputation during and following a crisis. Prior research suggests that stakeholders assess those factors when perceiving a crisis, how they feel about the entity and its actors, and stakeholders assess the organization's resultant reputation (Coombs, 2007a). Ultimately, behaviors in relation to the entity and its actors and consideration of future interactions decide whether crisis has been overcome, and not simply the remediation strategies that were conveyed outwardly (Coombs, 2014, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2014, 2008).

The first part of this chapter will define and explain crises. Situational crisis communication theory is explained, especially focusing on the assessment factors that are considered when determining crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes during or following crises. As aforementioned, this dissertation argues that the assessment factor, relational history, is understudied in crisis, especially in sport-related crisis, so this chapter also explains how that factor relates to identification.

The second section of this chapter explores individual and group identification and how identification relates to sport. An overview of measurement of sport identification is also discussed. Taken together, sport identification is related back to the perceptions of prior

reputation and past relationship and is further discussed in relation to resultant behaviors, such as word-of-mouth, which is evidenced in situational crisis communication theory.

This dissertation argues that resultant behavioral communication stems from the combination of prior reputation and past relationship, coupled with identification. These matters will be explored in the third section of this chapter. To explain, in sport specifically, an array of fan behaviors have emerged during forty years of research, and the underlying motivator of these fan behaviors is identification. Five fan behaviors are assessed for how each might be communicatively exchanged with others. These fan behaviors will help examine how sport and sport crisis are perceived and discussed among stakeholders.

The fifth section of this chapter explains the network perspective and how fan behaviors, coupled with perceptions and identification, can all be connected and studied in tandem with individuals' discussions of sport and sport crises. In other words, this research explores how and to whom crises are talked about. This sets a foundation to study the ways such discussion networks might differ by stakeholders' perception of a crisis or crisis response, their person levels of identification, and the fan behaviors activated during discussions.

Collectively, these facets combine for a detailed and nuanced view of crisis perceptions. Moreover, the five areas combine to help answer the main thesis of this dissertation: to examine the theoretical relationship among stakeholders' perceptions, identification, fan behaviors, and how people resultantly discuss sport-related crises in their social networks. To begin the theoretical examination, crisis is explored in a unique manner that leads with stakeholders' perceptions of crisis and centers personal identification to explore the depth of prior reputation and past relationship that drives resultant communication behaviors.

Crisis Communication

Coombs (2014) conceptualizes crisis as "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders," (Coombs, 2014, p. 2). Crises can relate to "health, safety, environmental, and economic issues, and can seriously impact an organization's performance" (p. 2), generate negative outcomes, and "disrupt or effect an entire organization or have the potential to do so," (p. 4). In a basic sense, crisis is also conceptualized as "unpredictable but not unexpected," (Coombs, 2014, p. 3). Coombs separates organizational crisis from larger-scale natural disasters like hurricanes, for example, because disasters require a much different response and are perceived in a very different ways from organizational crisis. For example, disasters are commonly handled at the governmental level, with many responding entities and focuses mostly on adjusting information for physical safety and psychological coping (Coombs, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Liu & Kim, 2011). The common thread among any type of crisis, however, is the management of crisis through communication.

Crises are managed through crisis communication (Coombs, 2014). Recall that the original development of crisis-related responses were rooted in rhetorical self-defense, generally focused outwardly from the organization, entity, or actor experiencing the crisis. Crisis communication has evolved to become a function of the practice of public relations because crises are "a threat to relationship," and any threat to relationship, "is a threat to the reputation," (Coombs, 2014, p. 35). Crisis communication, therefore, is the *lifeblood* of managing a crisis, according to Coombs (2014).

Nearly sixty percent of all crisis communication research focuses on case studies of organizational response to crises (Avery et al., 2010; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015). Crisis research has also included investigations of how other stakeholders or influencers

communicate about crises. For example, research has assessed how the media react to crisis by constructing news frames (An & Gower, 2009) or the ways media engage in adversarial reporting in response to crisis (Harker, 2017). Social media use has been studied for information seeking during crises (Austin, Liu, & Jin 2012; Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014), and social media use for communicating and coping with crisis (Brown & Billings, 2012) have been studied. Still, the vast majority of crisis research remains on the organization's response and reputational outcomes.

Meta-analyses of crisis communication literature have found image repair theory (Benoit, 2015, 1995) and situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 1995) are the two most often applied theoretical approaches to crisis communication research (Avery et al., 2010; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015; Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009; Nekmat, Gower, & Ye, 2014). The two theories have been replicated, tested, and scattered into subfields of study, including sport, that have also tested and expanded remediation strategies and broadened categorizations of crises.

Image repair theory (IRT) as aforementioned is rooted in rhetorical self-defense and focuses on remediation strategies for repairing reputation following a crisis (Benoit, 2015, 1995; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). IRT envelopes a variety of entities and actors that endure crises, including organizations, countries, and celebrity personas. IRT also specifically includes sport-related crises (Benoit, 2015; Benoit & Hanzcor, 1994). Research on sport crises that applies IRT generally focuses on framing, rhetorical, and critical cultural analyses of case study situations that analyze the offered rhetorical self-defense strategies by the entity or actor experiencing the crisis. This type of research is difficult to quantify because of its subjective form (Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009). The theory is also limited in that it offers only the one-way outwardly rhetorical

self defense in response to crisis and no other theoretical reach to the publics or stakeholders' perceptions of the crisis, which renders it unusable for this dissertation's focus.

A closely complimentary emerging conceptual framework in crisis communication is the rhetorical arena (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010, 2005), and this framework closely relates to the goals set forth in this dissertation. The rhetorical arena is an emerging conceptual response to the overwhelming sender-oriented theoretical approach commonly applied to crisis communication. Frandsen and Johansen (2010b) note that stakeholders interpret crisis within the rhetorical arena in several ways, including: the assessment of personal stakes in group membership, interpretations of a crisis, the strategic management of a crisis, and the discursive multiple voices and genres related to particular crises. Still though, this is an emerging conceptual framework, far from theoretical soundness but complimentary to the crisis conversation, nonetheless.

The following sections will offer an in-depth review of the most commonly applied empirically-based crisis communication theory: situational crisis communication theory. Situational crisis communication theory is the theoretical framework within which this dissertation is based. The following sections explain situational crisis communication theory, the differences between approach from the standpoint of an organization or the perception of a stakeholder, and an overview of the affective and behavioral considerations the theory offers in crisis assessment. The section wraps up with an overview of how crisis communication connects to sport and to the NFL, specifically, and then explains how identification closely links to stakeholders' perceptions.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) is an organization-focused, empirically applied crisis communication typology (Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 2004, 1998, 1995; Coombs &

Holladay, 2009, 2008, 2006, 2002, 1996; Kim et. al., 2009). SCCT is based upon attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1986) and encompasses an organizational communication approach for crisis communication focused on types of crisis, and ten prescriptive remediation strategies. SCCT extrapolates additional aspects of crises that reach wider and deeper than IRT's sole focus on remediation. For example, SCCT extends beyond crisis types and remediation strategies to include reputational assessment and the affective and behavioral reactions of stakeholders that occur in response to that reputational assessment (Coombs, 2007a, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2008, 2006). This dissertation situates itself under this theoretical framework. The paragraphs that follow detail the theory and how each component applies to this dissertation.

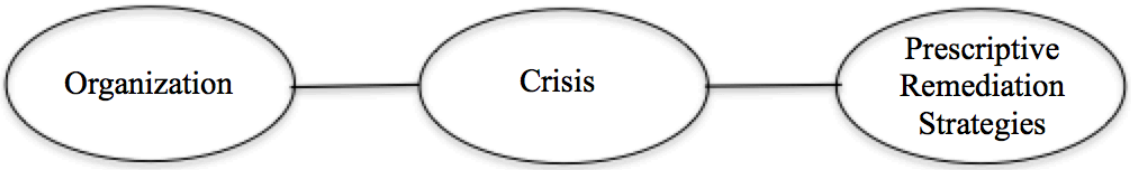
As aforementioned, SCCT grew out of attribution theory. Coombs notes that when crises occur individuals look to where the responsibility should be attributed (Coombs, 1995). This sense making process seeks to answer why something occurred. Heider (1958), the original author of attribution theory, introduced attribution theory around the same time that social learning theory, cognitive dissonance, balance theory, and other cognitive consistency and social psychology theories were being discussed (Weiner, 2008). Heider likened attribution theory to the analogy of the cause for sand to be present on his desk. In other words, who or what could be attributed responsibility for the sand dirtying up his desk.

Weiner's (2006) research states attribution is shaped by locus, controllability, and stability. Locus is split into internal or external locus of control (Coombs, 2007b). Controllability is the entity or actor's ability to alter the crisis-invoking behavior, and stability infers whether the cause is temporary or long lasting. More importantly, attribution influences resultant perceptions,

emotions, and behavior. Coombs notes that attribution is the linking variable between the types of crises and the prescriptive remediation strategies applied to respond to those crises.

Crisis categorization and response. The crisis literature is saturated with retrospective examinations of various forms of crisis and the accompanying self-defense response offered by the entity or actor experiencing the crisis (Coombs, 2014). Coombs' earliest developments of SCCT, titled "Choosing the Right Words," focused on analyzing a crisis, deciphering attribution, and then pairing prescriptive response strategies to certain crisis clusters and crisis types [see Figure 2.1] (Coombs, 1995).

Figure 2.1. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 1 Diagram*



Note: This simple figure depiction presents the underpinnings of traditional crisis communication case study research. Today's SCCT model grew from these basic tenets.

Coombs developed three crisis clusters: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster, and the preventable/intentional cluster. Differing types of crises are categorized under these clusters. Each cluster progressively increases in reputational threat because of concurrent increases in crisis attribution. To explain, the victim cluster holds the lowest levels of crisis attribution because the entity or actor experiencing the crisis is perceived to be a victim of the crisis situation, not the perpetrator. This cluster includes crises such as natural disasters, workplace violence, rumors, or product tampering (Coombs, 2007a). Examples of the victim cluster can include an industrial fire destroying property and rendering an organization unable to continue its business practices (Ulmer, 2011), or when Tylenol experienced its cyanide product-tampering crisis.

The accidental cluster spurs increased attribution compared to the victim cluster but crisis attribution remains relatively low in this cluster. The accidental cluster reflects accidents that occur that could cause some form of harm to others, albeit accidentally. The accidental cluster includes hefty challenges, technical-error accidents, and technical-error product harm (Coombs, 2007a).

The intentional/preventable cluster holds an increased level of crisis attribution because this cluster includes crises such as human-error accidents, human-error product harm, and managerial misdeeds (Coombs, 2007a). The crisis types under this cluster include varying degrees of intentionality and are perceived as preventable. Organizational misdeeds like law or regulation violations by management that knowingly put stakeholders at risk are commonly included in this cluster (Coombs, 2004). The General Motors ignition switch crisis is an example of this cluster. General Motors' management knew about the faulty ignition switch for ten years yet did not recall its vehicles to fix the problem. Some stakeholders who purchased the faulty ignition switch GM vehicles died in vehicle malfunctioning accidents. The attribution of responsibility was therefore high for this crisis.

Prescriptive remediation strategies. Whether a crisis is accidental or intentional, sport-related or otherwise, "Choosing the Right Words" is imperative to maintaining or repairing an entity's or actor's reputation during and following a crisis (Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 1995). Crisis communication responses are meant to accommodate stakeholders (Coombs, 2007b). In other words, when a crisis occurs, the entity or actor responds with a remediation strategy and that strategy is intended to be accommodating to some degree to help the message receivers cope with the crisis. The remediation strategy, or self-defensive effort, is therefore intended to offer adjusting information for physical and psychological coping, is an effort to save face, and is a

way to communicate accommodation to stakeholders to remediate the crisis. Coombs links crisis types to attribution to aid in deciphering the appropriate remediation responses (Coombs, 2007b, 2004, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Resultantly, SCCT provides a comprehensive list of ten remediation strategies that are matched to the types of crises within the crisis clusters (Coombs, 2007a). The ten strategies are classified as either primary or secondary strategies and include: denial, attack the accuser, scapegoat, excuse, justification, compensation, and apology (primary); and reminder, ingratiation, and victimage (secondary). Effective crisis response requires a precise strategy or combination of strategies, and if the wrong strategy or combination of strategies is executed, the whole approach can blow up into more of a crisis than the original crisis. Ultimately, the goal of crisis remediation efforts includes the minimization of reputational damage, maintaining purchasing intention, and "preventing negative word-of-mouth" (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, p. 40).

Types of crises in sport. The types of crises that involve sport organizations are often quite different than those occurring for other business organizations. The most often occurring crises in sport involve transgressions that are internally ignited by actors within and throughout the organization. For example, spoken or gestured slurs (including racial and homophobic slurs), the use of performance enhancing drugs or being caught using prescription drugs or alcohol illegally (i.e. driving under the influence), off-field assault and domestic assault, sexual assault, and cheating or rule breaking are common transgressions related to sport (Schrotenboer, 2015). Sport crises can include transgressions by organizations such as leagues and teams, as well as individuals such as athletes, coaches, coordinators, owners, and other organizational senior leadership.

Scholarship on sport crises reflects these sources of transgressions and the rhetorical self-defense applied to remediate sport-related crises. Wenner's (2013) book, *Fallen Sport Heroes, Media, and Celebrity Culture*, for example was categorized into four main sections that depict the foci commonly researched in sport-specific crises: framing and mediation of sport crisis, athlete as celebrity, team sport celebrity, and sideline sport celebrity. Additional topical areas of sport crisis communication includes organizational crisis (Benoit, 2015, 1995; Coombs, 2014, 1999; Fortunato, 2000, 2008), individual crisis (Benoit & Hanzcor, 1994; Brazeal, 2008), audience perceptions (Brown & Billings, 2013), cross cultural considerations (L'Etang, 2006), rhetoric, kategoria, apologia, and antapologia (Harker, 2017, Kruse, 1981; Stein, Barton & Turman, 2013; Ware & Linkugel, 1973), new media (Brown & Billings, 2013; Sanderson, 2013; Sanderson & Hambrick, 2012), and gender (Brown, Billings, Mastro, & Brown-Devlin, 2015). All of these areas have been researched at least to some degree to investigate the crisis response strategies that were offered for these various types of sport-related crises in an effort to build prescriptive strategies specific for sport crises.

Noticeably, the transgressions common in sport differ considerably from those mentioned in SCCT's crisis clusters and types (e.g. technical error accidents or human error product harm). But again, this dissertation reaches far beyond crisis typology (and response), to instead focuses on stakeholders' perceptions of wrongdoings. In order to understand stakeholders' perceptions, however, it is recommended that the whole crisis storyline is also understood (Coombs, 2007b), and that stakeholders' relationships with the entity or actor experiencing the crisis be considered (Coombs, 2001). For these reasons, and in conjunction with that direction, this dissertation explores extended perceptions in response to sport crises. The next section explains.

Perception valence. Crises are generally discussed as negative events and negatively perceived events are most likely to motivate attribution (Coombs, 2007b). Moreover, the "attribution process can have significant, negative ramifications" (Coombs, 2007b, p. 376), but what is lacking in crisis literature, however, are examinations of positive perceptions related to crisis. To explain, Weiner (2008, 2006, 1986) argued that attribution theory should be extended to also include positively valenced attributions. In other words, attribution relates to both negative and positive perspectives, Weiner argued, and both should be considered because we attribute responsibility for negative outcomes but we take credit for positive outcomes.

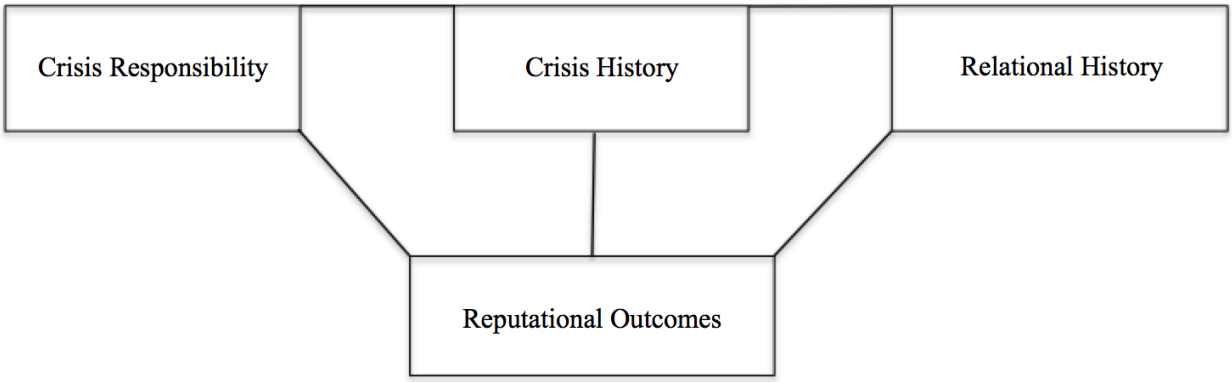
Positive perceptions are not as widely discussed or studied in crisis, but sport crises might necessitate such a broadened and inclusive view. To explain, when Roger Goodell extended the corrective action strategy of suspending Tom Brady for four games in the Deflategate crisis, not every NFL stakeholder attributed that as a negative ramification. Of course, Goodell being booed at the Super Bowl evidenced the remediation strategy was perceived negatively by Patriots fans, but fans of rival teams likely did not mind that the star quarterback was warming the bench while his team played their favorite team. Point being, perceptions may differ concerning crisis depending upon one's view. In an effort to dig deeper into crisis perceptions, this dissertation utilizes Coombs' assessment factors—crisis responsibility, crisis history, and past reputation and relationship [also known as relational history]—to describe how stakeholders' perceptions develop.

Crisis perceptions. Coombs (2014) once wrote, "it is the perceptions of a stakeholder that help to define an event as a crisis," (p. 3). Coombs was suggesting that reputations are challenged during times of crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) because stakeholders consider the crisis and develop perceptions in response to that crisis, and then reputation is an outcome of

those perceptions. This dissertation positions the investigation into stakeholders' perceptions along the same continuum. In other words, stakeholders' perceptions are divided into two main, overarching categories of investigation: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. The sections to come explain the components that make up these two main overarching categories.

Note in Figure 2.2 that stakeholders' perceptions of key aspects related to crises ultimately result in reputation perception. Stakeholders therefore assess these overarching factors related to crises that shape their ultimate perceptions of the organization's reputation. Those assessment factors include crisis responsibility, crisis history, and prior reputation or relationship [i.e. relational history] (Coombs, 2007a, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Crisis responsibility includes several components such as amount of evidence, crisis history is measured by how many times an organization has endured or initiated the crisis, and prior reputation and relationship is rated by relational history or personal past experiences with the entity or actor experiencing the crisis (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Each factor is discussed in more detail below, but first an example in sport crises is offered to better explain the process depicted in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 2 Diagram*



Note: This figure depicts the assessment factors stakeholders weigh when processing information concerning a crisis and developing a resultant perception of organizational reputation.

The Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis offers an example of how stakeholders move through these perception assessments. Dallas Cowboys football player, Ezekiel Elliot, was accused of domestic assault in 2016. Crisis responsibility is assessed by examining the evidence presented that Elliot had assaulted his alleged victim. Criminal charges were brought against him but he denied any guilt related to the charges. Crisis history was a complicating component in the Elliot case because the season prior had brought on an onslaught of domestic assault cases involving NFL players. Stakeholders needed to sift through perceptions about whether Elliot or his victim were telling the truth, while also considering the history of prevalence of NFL players who have engaged in domestic assault.

Elliot later engaged in other negatively perceived behaviors toward women, like being caught on video pulling down a women's shirt at a parade. As is likely in crises, stakeholders assess relational history. This assessment factor is mutually dependent on the entity or actor experiencing the crisis as well as the stakeholder sifting through perceptions in response to the crisis. To better explain, Elliot's behaviors that insinuate the charges against him are true will result in stakeholders questioning his past reputation concerning such behavior. Moreover, past relationship will vary among NFL fans. Elliot performed well for the Dallas Cowboys and that team's fans could perceive a beneficial relationship with Elliot that would be much stronger and more positive than fans of other NFL teams.

Taken together, the assessment factors are key crisis perception antecedents to reputational outcomes. The next several subsections explain these assessment factors in more detail.

Crisis responsibility. Crisis responsibility can be defined as both an attribution of crisis responsibility and as an assessment of crisis. The crisis responsibility assessment factor envelops

several measureable components. These components include the amount of blame, the amount of evidence present, the source of the crisis, and whether the crisis was accidental or intentional.

Recall that attribution theory is the root of SCCT, and Coombs conceptualizes attribution as being responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007a). He wrote, "If the organization is deemed responsible, the reputation suffers and stakeholders become angry," (p. 166). Several considerations are included in the assessment factor of crisis responsibility. Stakeholders make sense of crises by first categorizing the perceived seriousness of the crisis. Then, stakeholders assess how responsible the entity or actor is for the crisis occurrence. In other words, did the entity or actor cause the crisis or did someone or something else impress the crisis upon the entity or actor? Thirdly, stakeholders review the amount of evidence available to support the prior components (Coombs, 2007a, 1998, 1995). This assessment factor cumulatively reaches back to the crisis cluster categorizations for these listed initial assessments of crisis responsibility.

Crisis responsibility is weighed by stakeholders by first considering the crisis cluster within which the crisis can be categorized. Crisis clusters were discussed in prior sections of this chapter but as a refresher, the clusters include the accidental cluster, the victim cluster, and the intentional/preventable cluster. Each cluster progressively increases in reputational threat and concurrently in attribution of responsibility (Coombs, 2007a, 1995). The victim cluster holds a mild level of reputational threat and the weakest crisis attribution because the entity or actor experiencing the crisis is perceived to be more a victim within the crisis (e.g. a natural disaster) and not the perpetrator. The accidental cluster holds a moderate level of reputational threat with still minimal crisis attribution because this cluster reflects accidents that occur that could cause harm to others, yet not intentionally. The third cluster is perceived as intentional, or at least

preventable, and this cluster holds the most severe level of reputational threat with strong crisis attribution (Coombs, 2004).

The locus of control for the crisis is the second measurement within the assessment of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 1998). Coombs mirrors Weiner's (2006) conceptualization on attribution theory's locus of control, which is classified as internal or external, and whether the misdeed was accidental or intentional (Coombs, 2007b, 1995). In Coombs' (1998, 1995) earliest work, he identified these four control ratings as crisis frames. The external and accidental were later classified under the victim cluster and the accidental cluster, whereas the internal and intentional were later classified under the intentional/preventable cluster. The reputational threat and the attribution of responsibility are lower for a crisis categorized as externally charged or accidental, and considerably higher for a crisis classified with an internal impetus or deemed as intentional.

Finally, crisis responsibility is also assessed by the amount of evidence to support either of those first two components. Coombs (1995) notes a "veracity of evidence" versus "ambiguous evidence" in measuring responsibility (p. 458). The two situate at opposite ends of the attribution continuum—from mild attribution with ambiguous evidence to severe attribution when there is a veracity of evidence present.

The Ray Rice domestic assault incident in 2014 relates the evidence measurements to this dissertation's topic of sport crisis. Rice, a running back who played for the Baltimore Ravens, reportedly punched his then-fiancée, Janay Palmer, in the face, knocking her unconscious in an elevator at an Atlantic City casino ("Ray Rice suspended," 2014), but it was not until months later when video footage was released publicly by *TMZ* of the actual act of Rice punching his fiancée ("Ray Rice elevator," 2014). The NFL's stakeholders became enraged when the video

was released. The veracity of evidence of actually visualizing the act in the video resulted in a much stronger amount of blame and therefore punishment (e.g. banishment from the league) than did the accusation that was made earlier, verbally (the earlier punishment was a two-game suspension). The latter mirrors the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis because no visual proof was offered alongside the verbal accusation.

Stakeholders assess the type of crisis, the locus of control, and the amount of evidence, and they assess how much the entity or actor is to blame for the crisis. The next factor in crisis perception assessment involves crisis history.

Crisis history. The second factor assessed to form stakeholders' perceptions is crisis history. Crisis history accounts for how common crises occur. This is different from crisis responsibility yet still related to attribution. For example, the more often a wrongdoing is carried out, the more intentional it is perceived. Researchers have measured crisis history by how many times an organization has endured or initiated the particular crisis being assessed (Coombs, 1998). Crisis history is measured along a continuum from a one-time event to one within a series of events. Crisis history is important because repeated offenses result in increased reputational threats, and therefore attribution of responsibility (Coombs, 2014, 2004, 1998). Relating this concept back to Ray Rice and the NFL's 2014 season, Rice was one of six domestic assaults involving NFL players that season (Schrotenboer, 2015).

Prior reputation and relationship. Prior reputation and relationship is another assessment factor that stakeholders apply following a crisis, and this is where this dissertation focuses most succinctly. An explanation is necessary here to describe the underlying premise behind this assessment factor because prior reputation and relationship has a very specific meaning. Prior reputation and relationship was originally coined as organizational performance, (Coombs, 1998)

and later as *relational history* (Coombs 2001). Relational history is a more widely encompassing term to explain the meaning behind prior reputation and relationship. The prior reputation and relationship factor is identified within the SCCT framework as "intensifying factors," that interrelate with crisis history and crisis responsibility to resultantly construct reputation perceptions (Coombs, 2007a, p. 168).

It is important to note here that this dissertation operationalizes this assessment factor as relational history. In past studies utilizing experimental design, reputation was measured as a pre- and post-perception (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). This dissertation measures reputation as an outcome, just as the SCCT model depicts in its epicenter (see Figure 2.2 above or Figure 2.3 below). The positioning of reputation also shows that reputation perception is an outcome of the three factors that make up stakeholders' perceptions. Therefore, this dissertation conceptualizes and measures reputation as an outcome of stakeholders' perceptions and this assessment factor (past reputation and relationship), is operationalized as relational history.

To further explain relational history, an entity holds a relationship with stakeholders that creates some level of interdependence or features some factor that "binds the two together," (Coombs, 2014, p. 35). Coombs (2001) describes this as relational history, and it is this specific concept within which this dissertation is positioned. The relational history between a stakeholder and an entity will effect stakeholders' perceptions. For example, crisis research has explained buffer and halo effects as effects of relational history. As such, favorable ratings of prior interdependent interactions can become crisis "buffers" against resultant negative perceptions or attribution of responsibility during or following a crisis (Coombs, 2007a). Coombs and Holladay (2006) additionally discuss "halo effects" as a subset or type of crisis buffer, which are also connected to reputational assessments. Relational history, for example, results in a halo effect to

offer the entity or actor "the benefit of the doubt" when deciding upon crisis responsibility or crisis attribution. It is for these reasons that relational history should be considered in the overall reputational assessment following a crisis (Coombs, 2007a, 1998). This portion of stakeholders' perceptions links to identification because of the binding interdependence, and resultant buffers, as Coombs points out (Coombs, 2014).

Reputational outcomes. A reputational outcome is the second overarching category measured in this dissertation. Reputational outcome is positioned in the SCCT model as a result of all the components mentioned above that make up crisis perceptions (see Figure 2.2). The cumulative crisis perceptions funnel into reputational outcomes, and then result in affective and behavioral responses to crisis (see Figure 2.3).

Reputation is a perception-based construct (Walker, 2010) and is best explained by Hopwood et al., (2010) who wrote that reputation is, "everything you do, everything you say, and everything anyone else says or thinks about you" (p. 17). Reputation can be rated as favorable or unfavorable, competent or incompetent, and as a perceived level of integrity (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). These assessments reach to how acceptable or how poorly an entity or actor has treated or will continue to treat its stakeholders. Each positive rating—favorable, competent, a high level of integrity, for example—aids in reputational maintenance over time. Crises, depending upon stakeholders' perceptions, can drastically affect the reputation capital that was built over time. Coombs (2007a) explains:

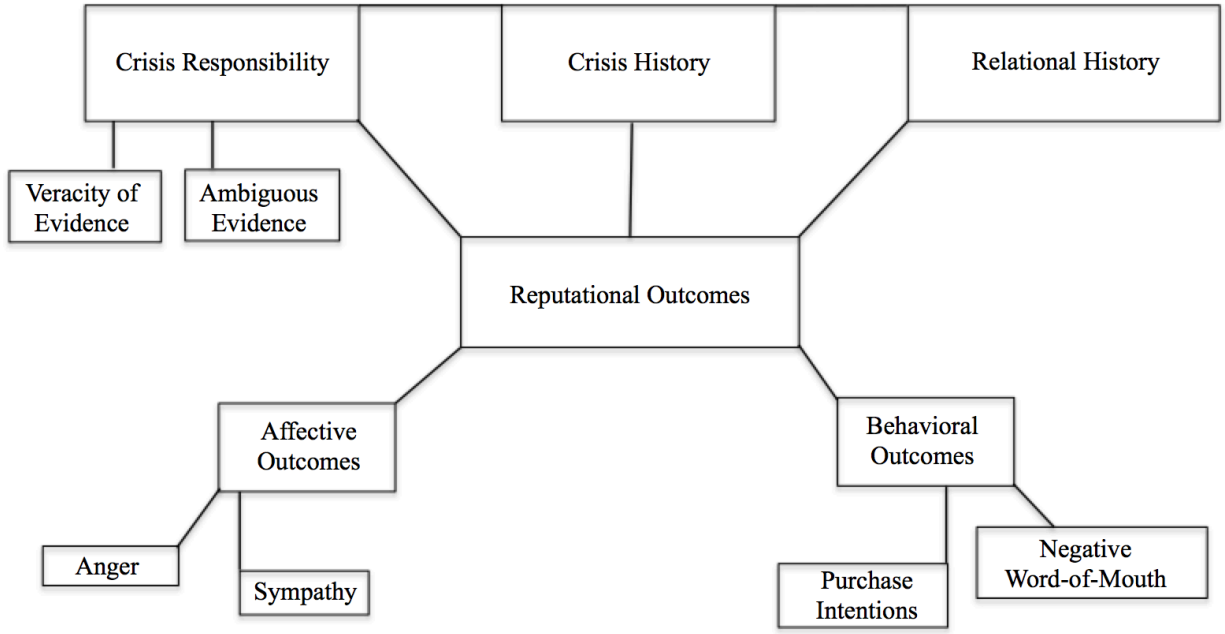
> A crisis will inflict some reputational damage—reputational capital is lost. A favorable prior (pre-crisis) reputation is a buffer against the reputational capital lost during a crisis. An organization with a more favorable prior reputation will still have a stronger post-crisis reputation because it has more reputational capital to spend than an organization

with an unfavorable or neutral prior reputation. As a result, a favorable prior reputation means an organization suffers less and rebounds more quickly. (p. 165)

This dissertation is situated across these assessment factors, those that measure crisis perceptions and those that measure reputational outcomes because of crisis perceptions. This research expands the focus from negative perceptions to also include positive perceptions to explore the buffers that could be present in sport crises (Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 2007b, 2004, 1998, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2008, 2006). The majority of current crisis research is focused mostly to the negative, especially in relation to resultant affective and behavioral crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes as the result from those crisis perceptions. Positive perceptions are however just as imperative to capture in overall crisis assessments. The next section more deeply explains the affective and behavioral outcomes offered by Coombs in the SCCT model, and a discussion furthers the discussion of negative affect to also include positive affect.

Affective and behavioral responses to crisis. SCCT explains that stakeholders' perceptions result in affective and behavioral outcomes (see Figure 2.3). Crises enliven either anger or sympathy, or even joy (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). For example, a stakeholder might feel sympathetic toward an entity or an actor enduring a crisis of low crisis responsibility like a natural disaster within the accident crisis cluster. Alternatively, reactions of anger might be provoked if a crisis has a high attribution of crisis responsibility and an individual's loved one was harmed, such as a crisis categorized within the intentional/preventable crisis cluster. Still others might even feel joyful if a crisis forces a competitor out of business, for example (Coombs, 2007a).

Figure 2.3. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 3 Diagram*



Note: The SCCT model depicts how the assessment factors result in reputational outcomes, which then flows into the affective and behavioral outcomes Coombs notes are most common in response to crisis.

To again apply the Super Bowl example, Patriots fans felt sympathetic to Tom Brady and were angry with Goodell. Fan of rival teams may have felt joyful concerning Tom Brady's four-game suspension. These emotional responses resulted in a subsequent behavioral outcome: booing. In other words, the crisis perceptions and resultant affective outcomes informed behavioral outcomes.

Behavioral outcomes can be positive or negative also, depending upon the affective perception (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Two particular behavioral foci in SCCT is negative word-of-mouth and purchase intention (recall that SCCT is organization-focused). This means that a stakeholder's negative crisis perceptions might result in that stakeholder speaking negatively about the organization. Negative word of mouth, also explained by Coombs (2007a) as lashing out against the entity or actor in crisis, is moderated by anger (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

Behavioral outcomes can also include a stakeholder's willingness to continue the interdependent relationship with the entity or actor experiencing the crisis or to sever ties (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2004). For example, purchase intentions relates to a stakeholder's continuation of business transactions with an organization. Reaching to the prior example offered concerning the General Motors ignition switch recall crisis, stakeholders who typically purchased General Motors vehicles had to resultantly decide whether they would still be willing to purchase vehicles from General Motors after the organization's managerial misdeeds. In other words, stakeholders decide whether to continue the interdependent relationship or instead sever ties.

The affective and behavioral outcomes are resultant of stakeholders' perceptions. This dissertation investigates these two outcomes in more detail by assessing stakeholders' perceptions, measuring identification, and then capturing the social networks of individuals to assess who to talks to whom about sport-related crisis and whether perceptions and resultant behaviors are positive or negative. In other words, this dissertation will connect the theoretical relationships among stakeholders' perceptions to the actual behavioral outcome of negative word-of-mouth by assessing interpersonal crisis communication in response to crises.

Summary of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. SCCT is a comprehensive crisis framework that categorizes crises, helps crisis communicators determine which prescriptive strategies to apply for remediation, and offers a continuum of considerations for measuring stakeholders' perceptions of crises. SCCT's roots in attribution combine with the assessment factors for crisis perceptions, which result on reputational outcomes, and then feed into the affective and behavioral reactiveness to crises—all of which are applied in this dissertation to assess stakeholders' perceptions involving sport-related crises. A central argument

in this dissertation is that stakeholders' perceptions equate differing crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, and result in both negative and positive affective and behavioral outcomes. This dissertation tests these matters to assess sport fans' perceptions and the affective outcomes and communication behaviors that result concerning sport crises. This research further argues that sport identification, be it social identification or individual identification, possess predictive power over crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. The next section provides a thorough overview on sport identification and involvement, and the importance of measuring fanship and fandom levels when assessing sport-related crisis perceptions.

Stakeholders' Perceptions and Sport Identification

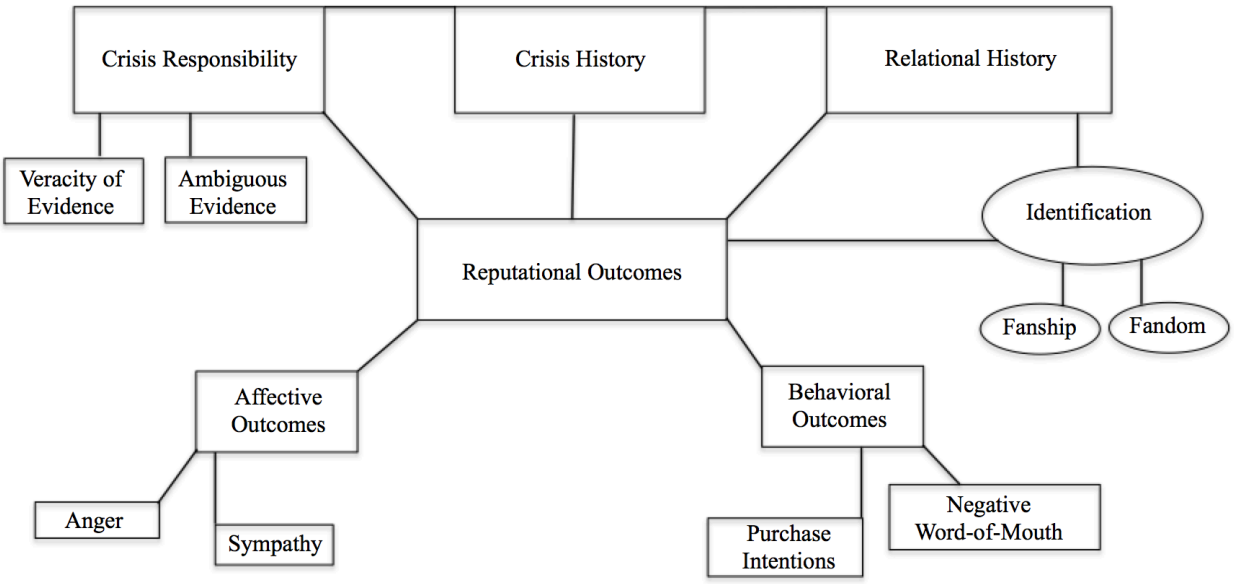
This dissertation argues that stakeholders' perceptions of crisis are driven in part by identification. This argument is shaped by testing the assessment factor—relational history—as sport-related relational history, namely fandom and fanship. This dissertation operationalizes fandom as a social identification with sport and fanship as an individual identification with sport. Following are the research-based arguments for both aspects of identification with sport and explanations as to why each should be considered in relation to sport-specific topics. Identification is therefore presented as representative of the relational history of NFL stakeholders.

Relationships and perceptions of those relationships are individual interpretations developed via a kaleidoscope of personal experiences, feelings, and involvement or engagement over time. In other words, the culmination of experiences with an entity or actor is as unique as they are individualized and those past experiences help an individual form perceptions and feelings related to that entity or actor. That connectedness that forms over time (i.e. past

relationship) inherently includes identification, which by definition is a sense of identity with someone or something (see Figure 2.4 for this conceptualization within the SCCT model).

This dissertation examines identification with sport through the measurement of fandom and fanship levels. Fandom and fanship have proven important measurements in past research examining sport fans' propensity to engage with sport and in the assessment of their reactive behaviors to sport and sport-related outcomes (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011). Fanship and fandom measure an individual's personal or group identification—or relational history—with sport.

Figure 2.4. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 4 Diagram*



Note: The added oval shapes show where sport identification fits into the SCCT model.

The fanship, fandom, and identification literatures are discussed in the sections to come to provide an overview of the many ways in which personal assessments form surrounding sport, and ultimately sport-related crisis. The study of connectedness to sport spans a continuum from the psychology of self at the individual level to the sociological shared identity at the social level. This study harnesses that continuum by dichotomizing the individual identification

(fanship) and the social identification (fandom) considerations of sport connectedness (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010).

This section will explore how identification results in emotional perceptions and social behaviors. This dissertation conceptualizes relational history as being connected to and even driven by sport identification. This connecting piece relating to reputation and relationship, and thus influencing a stakeholder's resultant perceptions, is explored in this section by reaching to the bodies of literature focused on media entertainment psychology, sport communication, and social psychology.

Identification and Involvement

The shared meaning of identification is carried across a spectrum of intensity and duration, as well as the cognitive, emotional (or affective), and the behavioral outcomes (Brown, 2015; Moyer-Guse, 2015). Identification connects to self-identity but in media studies, identification often is described as an abandonment of oneself in order to share identity with another. Brown (2015) goes so far as to say identification is "conforming to the perceived identity of a mediated persona both during and after consumption" (p. 275). For example, when a little girl watches a Disney movie and dresses up and acts like the star character from the movie. Moyer-Guse (2015) argues for a clear distinction between Brown's explanation of identification and what she proposes occurs less linearly and more naturally, which is *wishful* identification.

Identification leads to involvement. In fact, Funk and James (2001) argue that involvement is the key aspect in the assessment of fan levels concerning sport. People find an intrinsic value to supporting a favorite (especially winning) sport team. The authors wrote, "involvement can be thought of as exerting differential influence on an individual's psychological connection to a sport or team" (p. 131). Such psychological favoritism leads to

approach tendencies. For example, another important form of involvement in sport is the actual engagement with sport through game attendance. Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease (2001) suggested that more highly identified fans exhibit different behavioral responses, adding that identification with a team or an athlete is the most significant psychological factor influencing game attendance.

Personal experiences contribute to personal identification (Hirt & Clarkson, 2011), and these interactions can build trust, which is important for continued involvement (Harpham, 2008). In fact, the amount of time involved or the frequencies of interactions that occur between an individual and an entity or another actor are the components that increase identification (Larkin, Fink, & Trail, 2015; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Personal involvement differs across life stages and ages (Funk & James, 2001), and involvement and identification with sport, specifically, are nurtured through social relationships with parents, partners, siblings, friends, school, an individual's community, and even media (Funk & James, 2001, p. 127).

Translating identification into being a fan of a sport or a particular sport team relates highly to an individual's psychological connection to a particular sport or sport team (Kruse, 1977, 1981; Wann et al., 2001). For some, that identifying connection can grow stronger than for others. Hirt and Clarkson (2011) even called for a rank ordering of identification in sport from a casual fanship to a "primary social identity" (p. 3). Put simply, identification with sport varies by individual and social levels of identification. A review of the measurement of sport identification at these levels is operationalized in this dissertation as an individual identification (fanship) and a social identification (fandom). Explanations follow.

Fanship. Wann (2006) defines a fan as a follower of sport, someone who is actively interested and engaged with sport. The word "fan" is a derivative of "fanatic," Wann (2006)

noted, which puts an "emphasis on emotion over knowledge" (Hirt & Clarkson, 2011, p. 2). Sport fans have been operationalized as those who report high levels of enjoyment from sport, consume sport media for an hour a day or more, and actively seek out sport-related information (Gantz, Wang, Paul & Potter, 2006).

So, what is fanship? Fanship is described as a continuum from no identification or connection to high identification and close connectedness (Gantz et al., 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and "represents an array of thought processes, affective attachments, and behaviors that separate fans from nonfans" (Gantz et al., 2006, p. 96). Fanship is demonstrated through involvement behaviors such as: thinking about sport, talking with friends about sport, planning one's personal schedule around sport, socializing around sport, planning outings to a restaurant or bar to watch sport, or wearing branded sport apparel (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Gantz et al., 2006). Fanship additionally translates as mood, and valence of mood can depend upon many factors but namely the outcome of a game (Gantz et al., 2006). Ultimately, fanship includes perceived knowledge, exposure, interest, involvement, engagement, interaction, and sought after spectatorship (Gantz & Wenner, 1995; Gantz et al., 2006). This dissertation adds to this research by examining the exact ways in which stakeholders communicate about sport and which relationships they specifically activate in those conversations, a point discussed further in the network section. Next is a review of how fanship levels are currently measured.

Measuring fanship. For a couple of decades, the most widely used scale to measure sport fanship was the Sport Spectator Identification Scale [SSIS] (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, 1995). This scale was made up of seven items that originally measured collegiate basketball team identification, and has since been applied across numerous conceptual levels of sport.

Other measurements have emerged in the literature, however, like the

Psychological Commitment to Team scale based upon loyalty and commitment to NFL teams (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000). Others have used the Connection to Team Scale (Trail & James, 2001), which measures college football team connectedness. Funk and James (2001) combined these past works into the Psychological Continuum Model. The Psychological Continuum Model is a compilation of intrinsic and extrinsic measurements of psychological involvement with sport. The intrinsic measurements include awareness (how and when do people become aware of sport?), and attraction (enjoyment seeking, hedonistic attraction, seeking social acceptance, and achievement). The extrinsic measurements include attachment (attitudes toward sport strengthens in numerous physiological, psychological and sociological ways), and allegiance (a persistent loyalty, for example). Each of these scales has been applied to an array of sport-specific studies.

Fanship has been measured by asking just one question, taking a shortcut from the scale approach. For example, one study simply asked, "How much would you say you are a fan of sport," which was measured on a 7-point scale (End, Kretschmar, Campbell, Mueller, & Dietz-Uhler, 2003). Hahn and Cummings (2017) argued for an objective measurement of knowledge of sport versus the subjective measurement of fanship as an interest in sport. In testing the two comparatively they found those high in knowledge are generally report lower levels of fanship, and those who report higher levels of fanship actually know very little concerning the nuances of sport. The experimental sample was 60 percent female though and that could have convoluted those results, according to past research by Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, and Jacquemotte (2000) that reported men rate three times higher in reported sport knowledge than females. Conversely, Wann and Branscombe (1993) specifically noted that when measuring fan levels for one specific team, knowledge was evident and high.

Reysen and Branscombe (2010) connected fanship and involvement when they noted the inclusion of "the degree of emotional connection, affiliation with other fans, and investment in the interest" (p. 181). This enabled the break down of results to further define fanship. The scale also was built using dimensions of identification, and the authors ultimately argued that being a fan by personally identifying as a fan is *fanship*, and socially identifying as a fan is *fandom*. They noted that fans first feel personally connected to their interest or hobby (fanship) and that leads to higher levels of identification with other fans of that interest or hobby (fandom). This was among the first effortful study to dichotomize fanship and fandom, however, the resultant scale still includes components of both fanship and fandom.

In sum, the study of sport fanship spans several individual psychological concepts, including concept of self, fanship, identification, and involvement. The next section bridges the gap from self-identification and involvement to social identification and involvement with others in the leap from fanship to fandom by explaining the key components of social identification and touching upon the social comparison. A discussion on fandom, a broader social psychological level of in-group and out-group identification, and its measurement then follows.

Social identification. Just as attribution can be either positive (taking credit for a good outcome) or negative (blame for a perceived wrongdoing), individuals work toward a positive social identity and avoid a perceived negative social identity (Heider, 1958; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Weiner 2008, 1986). In social identity, this means connecting or distancing oneself from what is perceived as a favorable in-group and a comparative out-group. This process begins at the individual level and grows outwardly. An individual's identifiable social groups or categorizations grow and change and overlap over the course of one's life (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

When a social in-group identity is challenged in any negative manner—such as a losing season in sport, for example—efforts are taken to "differentiate" oneself or one's group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p 40). This differentiation might occur by either leaving the in-group or reshaping the in-group to be more positively viewed than a comparative out-group (Tajfel, 1982). When such dissonance occurs, people collectively close that cognitive gap by highlighting the positive attributes of the in-group or by highlighting the negative attributes of an out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). To translate this to sport, a football fan might minimize a loss with accusations that the rival team cheated or that the referees were particularly strict that day.

Social identification describes a portion of a person's self-concept within a larger group (Tajfel, 1982). Three characteristics of social identification are each sensibly applicable to sport. They include (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): internalization of belonging (Arizona Cardinals fans are part of the "Bird Gang"); group comparisons focused on certain attributes (how many championships have been won by favorite team versus rival team); out-group comparisons with a worthy opponent (playing last year's Super Bowl winner) and superiority maintenance (we have the leading rusher in the league).

Superiority is a characteristic maintenance attempt within social identification because it minimizes comparisons (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 39). Social comparison is conceptualized as the act of relationally comparing one's own group to other out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Rees, Haslam, Coffee and Lavallee (2015) note that in sport, specifically, social identity is both relational and comparative, and provides the very basis of sport-related group behavior. For example, a person who favors one football team in the NFC West might constantly compare his/her favorite team's statistics to a rival team's statistics also in the NFC West. Part of that fan's self-concept is identification and involvement as one member of all fans of that team. A fan

relationally compares his/her own team record to the rival team's record and resultantly feels more or less personally successful as a result of such comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This type of social identity comparison happens in many types of subgroups with which one might identify (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), but is particularly salient in sport (Rees et al., 2015).

Social identification and social comparison strengthens as in-group distinctiveness grows. To apply these concepts to sport, being part of a socially favorable group, such as fans of a winning team, offers superiority over other out-groups, rivals, or losing teams (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1995). This is why people enjoy associating with "the winning team" and as this larger social identification blossoms, involvement also increases. The socially relational identification to others connected to the winning team also becomes stronger and this connectedness is what defines sport fandom. Next, fandom is explained in detail.

Fandom. Fandom has been used synonymously and interchangeably in sport studies with fanship, until Reysen and Branscombe's (2010) attempt to separate the two into a more distinct dichotomy of individual and social levels. Webster's dictionary defines fandom as "being a fan of a particular person, place, or thing regarded collectively as a community or subculture." Fandom is therefore a social or group identification with other fans with a nod toward a collective esteem (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). In other words, fandom is a group-related identification attempt to attach oneself to a positively perceived group.

Fandom has three central underlying needs: validation, pleasure, and arousal (Hirt & Clarkson, 2011). These three needs vary greatly in individuals, however. Gender is the most prominent differing factor among these needs. For example, companionship and the sociability of watching sport and attending games differ vastly between males and females. Males score higher in fanship level (individual identification) and women in fandom levels (group

identification) due the sociability aspect of sport fandom (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Wenner & Gantz, 1998). Dietz-Uhler et al. (2000) noted that men and women are equally sport fans, but men identify and engage more with sport than women. Whereas men engage for the entertainment of sport and for economic motivation (Wann, Schrader, & Wilsen, 1999), women instead engage in sport with friends and family, according to some researchers (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Wann, Schrader, & Wilsen, 1999; Wenner & Gantz, 1998).

Fandom measurement. Fandom has been measured in many ways. One commonly used measurement has been the Sports Fan Motivation Scale which includes the following gender-inclusive components: eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family (Wann, Schrader, & Wilsen, 1999). The problem with the Sports Fan Motivation Scale is that most of its measures also closely relate to individual sport connectedness (fanship) and not solely the social or group aspects of fandom.

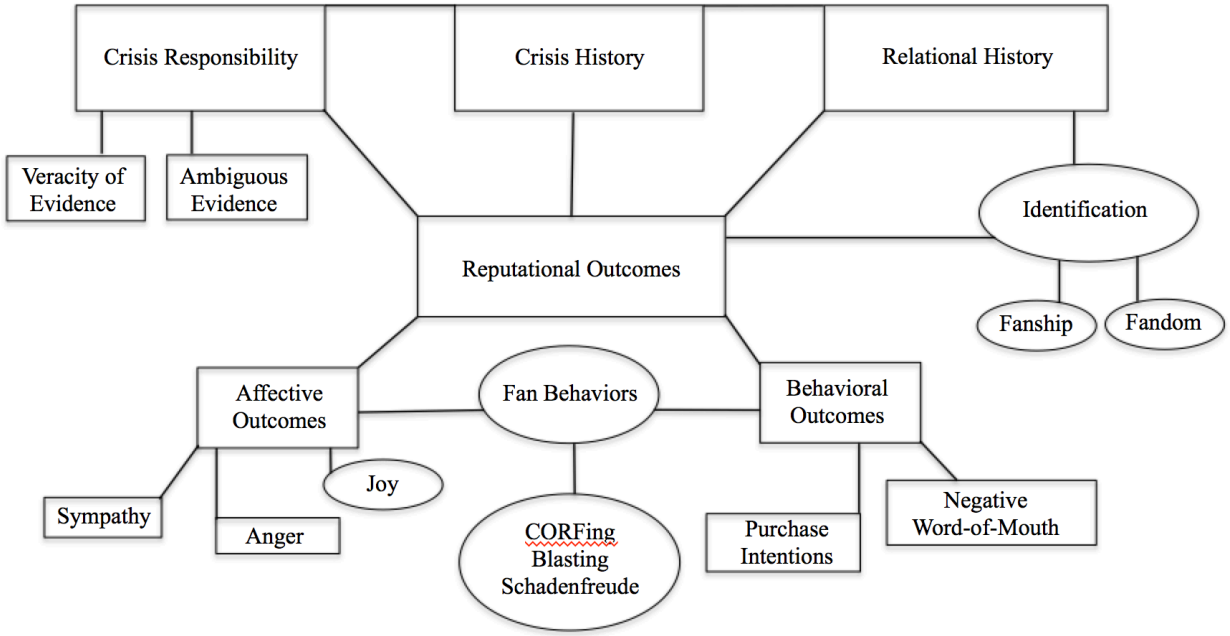
Reysen and Branscombe's (2010) work is the most precise to date but still more distinction is needed. For example, the authors inductively quizzed college students about general hobbies, ending up with an 11-item scale. The authors compared their newly constructed scale to the SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann 1995), and noted differences between the two rest upon identification. Since, this scale has been widely applied to measure fanship and fandom, so limitations exist. Namely, the scale is a mix of both individual measurements (fanship) and social measurements (fandom). As aforementioned, a more precise dichotomization is needed for individual identification and group identification, so this dissertation explores that gap by measuring both.

Identification is applied in this dissertation as a linking mechanism that relates to relational history in crisis assessment, as well as to the resultant stakeholders' perceptions of a sport-related entity or actor experiencing a crisis. Identification is measured as both fanship and fandom to capture both levels inherent in sport: the individual identification and the social identification levels. Both are also widely applied to the study of fan behaviors. In fact, fan behaviors are conceptualized as the resultant behaviors of identification and involvement with sport. The next section provides an overview of the fan behavior body of research and discusses why fan behaviors are important to include in the assessment of stakeholders' perceptions of sport-related crisis.

Assessing Fan Behaviors as Affective and Behavioral Outcomes

This dissertation argues that crisis perceptions are shaped, in part, by identification, and those two key considerations combine for affective and behavioral outcomes or response to crisis. Recall the SCCT offers a theoretical framework that reaches beyond the crisis clusters, types, and prescriptive remediation strategies (Coombs, 1995) to include stakeholders' perceptions of a crisis (Coombs, 2007a). Stakeholders' perceptions are divided into crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. The reputational outcome then determines how stakeholders feel about the entity or actor and how stakeholders will resultantly behave regarding the entity or actor (Coombs, 2014, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2009, 2008, 2006). The affective result reaches back to Weiner's (2006) interpretation of attribution where anger and sympathy are the major motivators for resultant behaviors. Coombs (2014, 2007a, 1995) explained that behavioral outcomes such as negative word-of-mouth and purchase intentions (see Figure 2.5) also occur in response to stakeholders' perceptions and reputational outcome.

Figure 2.5. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 5 Diagram*



Note: Additional oval shapes show how fan behaviors serve as a connecting measurement between affective and behavioral outcomes of crisis perceptions and how fan behaviors fit within the SCCT model.

Fan behaviors are a mix of psychological measurements for sociological outcomes. In other words, fan behaviors are based upon how a sports fan feels following game losses and wins, and fan behaviors assess how sport fans might act or react. As such, this dissertation positions fan behaviors in such a manner that they straddle the affective and behavioral outcomes posited in SCCT. This positioning carefully bridges the psychological considerations of stakeholders' perceptions and the sociological measurement of the communication behaviors that are captured in the discussion network analysis method of this dissertation.

Studies note that emotional responses are more pronounced among sport consumers (Gantz et al., 2006; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010), and an array of other studies have connected sport identification to those behaviors (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Researchers are now looking into underlying personality traits that drive fan behaviors (Devlin & Brown-Devlin, 2017). At the root of these behaviors, and a common theme in each of these fan behavior reviews, are image management (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman,

& Sloan, 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980), and in-group/out-group bias and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Turner, 1985).

Researchers have long studied the dramatization displayed by sport fans. This section of this dissertation encompasses a collective body of literature that has grown over the past forty years to encompass an array of *fan behaviors*. This section surveys these affectively driven sport consumers' behaviors that result in common communication characteristics of sport fans by providing an overview of the emergence and expansion of these behaviors and how fan behaviors are connected so succinctly to identification.

Types of fan behaviors. An array of fan behaviors has emerged throughout sport marketing and sport communication research. These behaviors are often measured as psychological undercurrents of reactiveness to sport. For example, the body of research on sport fan behaviors emerged in 1970s with a focus on "basking in reflective glory" or BIRGing (Campbell, Aiken, & Kent, 2004; Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; End, Dietz-Uhler, Demakakos, Grantz & Biviano, 2003; End, Dietz-Uhler, Harrick & Jacquemotte, 2002; Jensen et al., 2016; Sigelman, 1986; Spinda, 2011; and Wann & Branscombe, 1990). BIRGing is a resultant, direct effect of involvement with sport that extends itself as socially-demonstrated identification with the positive aspect of sport—winning.

BIRGing. BIRGing is defined as a demonstrated image management strategy of wearing the team's logo apparel following a winning game. The original Cialdini et al., (1976) study was conducted at Arizona State, Purdue, Ohio State, and Notre Dame universities, where researchers observed students at these universities wearing school-related logo apparel when attending classes on the Mondays following winning Saturday football games. The football team's victory caused students to identify more broadly with their institution, "and this heightened attraction

manifested itself in the tendency to wear school-identifying apparel" (Cialdini et al., 1976, p. 370). Such display of "vicarious achievement" (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 151) highlights how fandom might grow through social identification. For example, fans use descriptors such as "we" and "us" when talking about or reminiscing about a team win (Cialdini et al., 1976; Jensen et al., 2016). Ultimately, Cialdini coined the BIRGing behavior a social image management strategy. Since, several studies have found that identification with a team, sport, or university increases the likelihood of BIRGing behaviors (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

CORFing. Fans of losing teams reportedly attempt to maintain a positive identity by "*cutting off reflected failure*" [CORFing] (Campbell et al., 2004; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Jensen et al., 2016; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Fans who CORF demonstrate a regressive tendency concerning media use and information-seeking (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Jensen et al, 2016; Spinda, 2011) because of the resultant blasting or talking trash that commonly occurs when fans of a winning team tease rival losers (Spinda, 2011). The regressive media use combined with the absence of BIRGing following a loss (Jensen et al., 2016) are likely because of the fact that fans may believe they demonstrate "a less favorable social identity" when openly connected to a losing team (End et al., 2002, p. 1019). Studies have documented consistently that the higher a person's sport identification the less likely s/he is to CORF (Billings et al., 2017; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Conversely, lower levels of identification with a team, sport, or university correlates with a higher likelihood of CORFing behaviors (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Wann and Branscombe (1990) go so far as to say that those most apt to CORF are the ones responsible for game attendance fluctuations following winning or losing seasons, however

the measurement of CORFing in this study is arguably weak. The researchers ask only one question concerning CORFing that asked respondents how much enjoyment they garner from following their favorite team when the team is *not* successful. This measurement is troublesome because of its wording because enjoyment is what is actually be measured with that question. This dissertation aligns with Spinda's (2011) more comprehensive operationalization and measurement of CORFing.

A critical review of the fan behavior studies is imperative because of measurement overlap. When Wann and Branscombe (1993, 1990) introduced self-identification, they used measurements that closely mirrored those used for BIRGing and CORFing. Wann and Branscombe (1990) explored the predictive propensity of sport identification on BIRGing and CORFing behaviors, and found that the higher an individual's sport identification, the more likely s/he is to BIRG and the less likely s/he is to CORF, and conversely, the lower an individual's sport identification, the less likely s/he is to BIRG and the more likely s/he is to CORF. The study was aptly titled to denote these differences between "die-hard" and "fair-weathered" fans. Their results have unequivocally been supported by subsequent studies that have measured sport identification with these fan behaviors (Billings et al., 2017; Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008; Spinda, 2011; Trail, Kim, Kwon, Harrolle, Braunstein-Minkove, & Dick, 2012), but caution should be taken when basing research off of these former findings. The validity of some of those studies should be questioned because of the use of mirrored measurements. For example, the fanship scale includes a question that asks, "How often do you display the team's name/logo where you live/work/on clothing?" This is the very conceptualization, and question or set of questions, asked when measuring BIRGing (Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1990).

The fan behaviors reviewed so far in this section explain the ways in which an individual identifies with her/his sport entity or actors, and highlights how regular engagement results in increased identification with sport, even when portraying regressive information-seeking or communication behaviors. Identification with sport can become so entwined with self that self-esteem, mood, and image management strategies result. For example, Hirt, Zillman, Erickson, and Kennedy (1992) posited that these reactions are driven by self-esteem and not by mood, meaning if a favorite team loses, the fan's self-esteem drives the adverse propensity to engage in communication about the game. The avoidance is not necessarily occurring because the game loss caused the fan to be in a bad mood. End et al (2002) later found that self-preservation also occurs as a sports fan actively and publically attaches himself/herself to a winning team more often than to a losing team. These studies, like many others in this body of literature, describes the connections between perceptions, identification, and personal self-esteem, and how these combinations result in communicated behaviors. This dissertation extends the application of fan behaviors to the assessment of discussions concerning sport-related crises.

Negative fan-to-rival communication also occurs, which fall under fan behaviors, too. The next section provides an overview of these types of fan behaviors and explains how they each relate to sport and sport crisis communication.

Fan behaviors between rivals. Fan-to-rival behaviors also occur, and the outward behavior is commonly communication. For example, Cialdini and Richardson (1980) added a second image management strategy after their BIRGing work that they termed: *blasting*.

Blasting. Blasting is an out-group derogation also explained as "talking trash." Cialdini and Richardson (1980) experimented with student reactions to negative and positive in-group perceptions and found the students applied image management in speaking positively of their

own university and speaking negatively about a rival university. This out-group derogation was later operationalized to include explicit negative words when talking trash, and directly talking trash was measured as fan-to-rival communication (Bernache-Assollant, Lacassagne, & Braddock, 2007; Havard, 2014; Spinda, 2011). This leap did not necessarily include a full discussion as to whether the newer operationalization still reflected image management or something new, however.

Bernache-Assollant, Lacassagne, and Braddock (2007) examined blasting between two soccer teams. The authors wrote that their findings fell in line with "Tajfel and Turner's (1986) classical proposition that the desire to achieve or maintain positive feelings about one's own social identity may motivate out-group derogation" (p 386). Wann and Dolan (1994) argued years earlier, however, that sport fan behaviors were more a matter of a strong positive connection to their team's in-group and not so much that the fan wants to derogate the (out-group) rival team's fans.

Schadenfreude. Schadenfreude, which is a feeling of joy at another's adversity, is harmful to social relationships because it is discordant to harmonic relationships, warned Heider (1958). As Coombs (2014, 2007a) notes in SCCT, a more concordant reaction to another's misfortunate would be sympathy, not joy. Schadenfreude therefore creates an antagonistic relationship, similar to other fan behaviors demonstrated between rival sport fans (Havard, 2014; Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003).

The study of schadenfreude has taken shape by studying its presence in business and in sport (Cikara, Botvinick, & Fiske, 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Leach, Spears, & Manstead, 2015; Leach et al., 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009; Heider, 1958). Schadenfreude is conceived in three ways: when a misfortune befalls an envied person; misfortune is perceived as deserved; and

when something might be gained for the observer from that misfortune (Cikara & Fiske, 2012). For example, Leach and Spears (2009) measured the appearance of business professionals and told participants in an experiment differing stories about the individual. People were highly likely to find joy in a successful businessman's troubled scenario than in other people's scenarios. Finding joy in another's adversity brought into question the role of envy, and this study's findings posit that envy is indeed a predictor of schadenfreude. Other affective measurements are also linked. For example, schadenfreude has been measured with several emotions, including joy, happiness, relief, satisfaction, pride, gloating, sympathy, and sadness (Leach et al., 2015; Leach & Spears 2009; Leach et al., 2003).

Schadenfreude in response to sport stems from an in-group envy toward a winning rival team or a team of perceivably higher status (Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Leach et al., 2015). Furthermore, a study of World Cup soccer matches between countries found schadenfreude to correlate with higher levels of fanship and team identification (Leach et al., 2003), meaning schadenfreude may be more pronounced in sport fans.

Cikara et al., (2011) examined schadenfreude in sport fans by assessing MRI brain scans of baseball fans as they watched plays and game outcomes of their favorite and rival teams. Results resoundingly showed that sport fans activated the area of the brain that signifies happiness when his/her team played well or won a game. Even more interestingly, fans demonstrated slightly *higher* levels of happiness when a rival team lost or played poorly. Also, the anger and pain areas of the brain were activated when a fan's favorite team lost *and* when a rival team won. These findings link to the conceptualization of sport crisis perceptions of stakeholders. To explain, schadenfreude could be occurring in perceiving sport crisis in a similar way that it occurs in game outcomes. In other words, a highly identified sports fan experiences

happiness or joy from winning a game against a rival team. Will that same sports fan feel joyful if a rival team endures crises like Deflategate?

Dalakas and Phillips Melancon (2012) come close to this assumption. They measured schadenfreude in a totally different manner from the studies mentioned above and developed a measurement of schadenfreude that more closely relates to crisis perceptions concerning sport-related out-groups. The four-item scale included the following questions: "I will feel great joy if a company that sponsors a team I hate goes out of business," "I will feel great joy if the owner of a team I hate faces legal troubles," "I will feel great joy if a player of that team gets suspended for a year, even if the suspension was not completely deserved," and "I will feel great joy if the facility (stadium, arena) of a team I hate suffers damage." The measures proved reliable in their study and the middle two questions—which speak directly to common sport-related crisis occurrences in the NFL—loaded the highest (0.936 and 0.910, respectively). Thus, this dissertation operationalizes schadenfreude as a malicious joy taken from an out-group's adversity, and measures schadenfreude in two ways: as an affective measurement of a rival team's loss to a favorite team (Cikara, 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Leach 2015, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009; Havard, 2014; Heider, 1958) and as a reactive sport crisis perception (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012).

Blasting and schadenfreude are key fan-to-rival behaviors to measure in this study of sport-related crisis perceptions. These negatively charged outcomes will aid in parsing out the nuances of fan and nonfan perceptions of sport crises. This dissertation will use these fan-to-rival behaviors, coupled with identification levels, to measure whether a rival team experiencing a crisis is perceived and communicated in the same or similar manner as a rival team losing a

game, for example. This detailed exploration can inform crisis communicators how sport in general and sport-related crisis is perceived, and how stakeholders differ in those perceptions.

To this point, chapter two has provided an overview of the theoretical framework of SCCT, highlighting stakeholders' perceptions, which are divided into crisis perceptions and resultant reputation, and the affective and behavioral outcomes of those perceptions. This chapter has also discussed how identification measured at the social and individual levels links the SCCT assessment factor, relational history, to stakeholders' perceptions in a necessary way for sport-related crisis perceptions. Finally, the bridging of the affective and behavioral outcomes through fan behaviors helps funnel stakeholders' perceptions, identification, and the affective and behavioral outcomes into resultant communication behaviors of stakeholders throughout their offline and social networks. Together, this unique combination of crisis assessment in sport is analyzed via the lens of the network perceptive. The network perspective is another vital component for this research because the network perspective lends itself to the basic premises inherent in both public relations and crisis communication: relationships.

The next section of this literature review focuses on the network perspective in researching communication. An overview of social networks (both offline and online) is offered, followed by discussions detailing network theories and methods, and the multilevel analyses enabled by a network perspective. The next section also introduces functional specificity hypothesis, egocentric network analysis, and more specifically, discussion networks, which are the key method components applied in the dissertation.

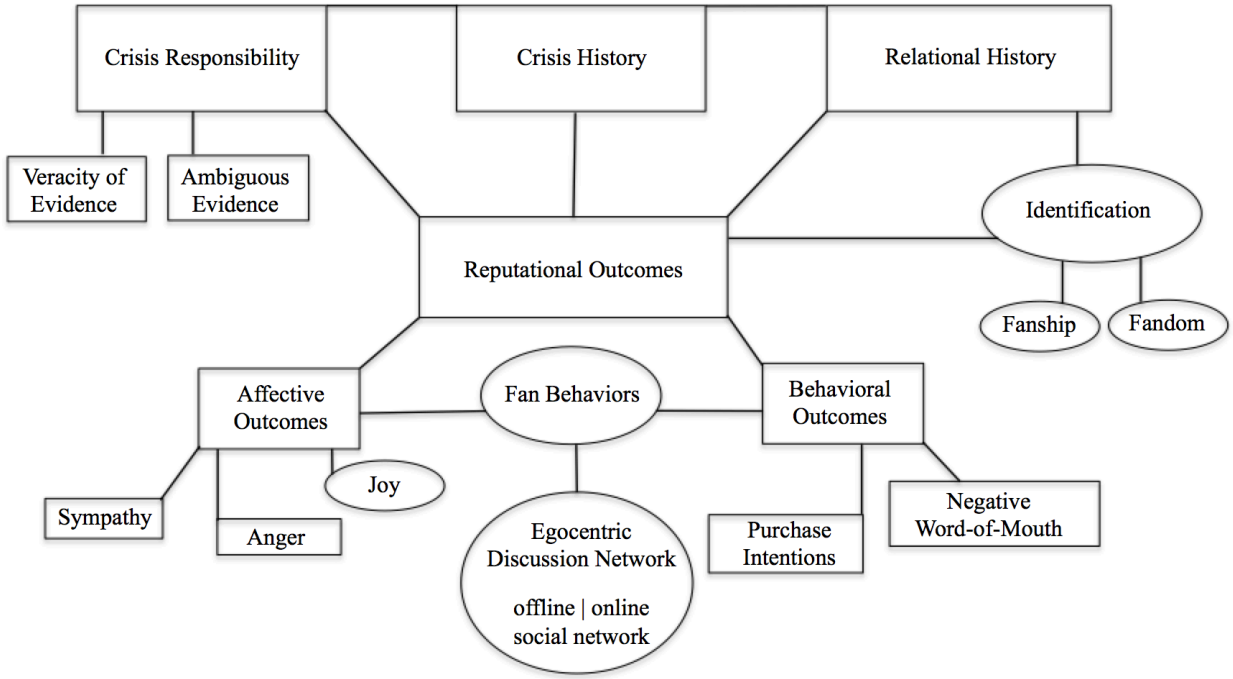
Network Perspective to Inform Situational Crisis Communication Theory

This section reviews the basic premise of the network perspective, including its family of theories, methods, and analyses. A thorough and in-depth overview of the network perspective is

a necessary primer in this chapter because the network perspective is not yet widely applied in communication, public relations, sport, or crisis communication. This general overview provides the information necessary to understand the network perspective, the methods and theories that inform the network perspective, how networks are analyzed, and how the network perspective is specifically applied in this dissertation.

Recall that SCCT is the guiding theoretical framework for this dissertation. The theories discussed in this section are to explain the underlying premise to the network perspective and how the network perspective links the conceptual frameworks investigated in this dissertation. To review, this dissertation focuses upon stakeholders' perceptions, identification, affective and behavioral outcomes of those stakeholders' perceptions, and the bridging of the affective and behavioral outcomes through the measurement of fan behaviors. Each of these concepts are focused within the context of sport and analyzed as the communication that flows throughout each respondent's existing offline and online social network (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. *Situational Crisis Communication Theory: Layer 6 Diagram*



Note: Finally, the added circles indicate how the SCCT model, sport identification, and fan behaviors all funnel into the egocentric discussion network.

The network perspective is applied in this dissertation to help measure the "interdependence" (Coombs, 2014, p. 35) related to stakeholders' perceptions, identification, and the fan behaviors that result in communication throughout individuals' social networks (online and offline). It is not enough to simply ask respondents for their perceptions. Instead, investigating how those perceptions are actually communicated as a result of the affective and behavioral outcomes of those perceptions can enliven this research by digging deeper into crisis perceptions than has ever before been achieved. This dissertation's application of a network perspective demonstrates more clearly the already existing offline and online social networks, and how, when, and with whom those existing relationships and communication exchanges are activated in response to sport-related crises. The ability to identify these multiple variables in tandem with each other to examine the *how* and the *why* certain relationships are activated by communication in response to crisis is a true strength of this approach to extending SCCT. This

research extends not only SCCT, but also the study of sport identification, sport communication, and the network perspective, which is explained in more detail in the sections to come.

Applying Network Perspective to Situational Crisis Communication

The network perspective is conceptualized much in the same manner as naturally occurring social phenomena. For example, Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson (2013) offer the following analogies to conceptualize networks:

> Much of culture and nature seem to be structured as networks—from brains (neural networks) and organisms (circulatory systems), to organizations (who reports to whom), economies (who sells to whom), and ecologies (who eats whom) (p.1).

The network perspective offers a more in-depth approach to researching social phenomena than traditional social science because the network perspective allows a social scientist to examine relational data in addition to the attributional data studied in traditional social science.

Exploration of sociological phenomena via a network perspective aids in moving beyond the simple descriptors and attribution of respondents and investigates who is connected to whom. The network perspective helps examine *why* entities and individuals are connected to each other and *how* they are connecting to one another (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). Network research can also help social scientists connect the psychological or emotional with behaviors or other sociological outcomes by examining many interrelating and relational variables at once, which is particularly beneficial to the current study (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Specific methods and families of theories drive the network perspective, and both are reviewed in the section to come.

Network methods and network levels. Network methods include two broad approaches: the whole network and the personal (or ego) network (Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, 2013;

Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). A whole network analysis encompasses all possible entities or actors within a specified boundary. An example would be a network analysis of one organization and the employees and managers that make up that organization (Burt, 2004). The other broad approach is a personal network analysis, which is conducted by using a sample of respondents (Borgatti et al., 2013). The respondent in a personal network research design is termed an ego. An example of this type of study could include a survey of sampled individuals in a community asking who they know and who among those they know they reach out to when seeking employment (Granovetter, 1973).

To fully understand network methods, the levels of network data should be explained. Three levels are commonly researched: nodes, ties, and networks. A node is an actor (or entity) that is present or active in a network (Borgatti et al., 2013). This is the most commonly researched level in network research (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011) and this level also is studied in the traditional social science approach. Both network and traditional social science examine attributes about the node, such as categorical information like gender or race. This monadic level allows researches to study an actor or entity or many actors or entities (Borgatti et al., 2013).

A node's analysis becomes relational when we consider that actor's unique relationships to another actors. This is the dyadic level of network research, which measures the connections or ties between two nodes (Borgatti et al., 2013). Ties are studied within network structures in four ways: similarities, social relations, interactions, and flows (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011; Himelboim, Golan, Moon, & Suto, 2014). In other words, ties examine relational connections and the effects, exchanges, and embeddedness of those connections (Borgatti et al., 2013). Ties can also represent attributes or characteristics like the amount of time two people

have known each other (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). In this dissertation, ties will include relational connections between the nodes such as who are connected as fans of the same team or who are rivals, the communication exchanges between the nodes, and how long two nodes have know each other.

Finally, ties that connect the nodes and those nodes and their respective connections make up the third level of network research: the network. More broadly, the network level is the sum or range of relationships among all the nodes and the attributes that tie them relationally (Borgatti et al., 2013). For example, the network level examines a whole organization (the employees and managers) and reviews the internal structure of a network. This is considered a mixed dyadic-monadic level, which means this level examines all actors in the network and their relationship ties to each other (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011).

In sum, whether researching a whole network or an ego network, the nodal level data become relational data when the ties between nodes are examined. Together, nodes and ties make up the network and the network level data allow for levels of analyses to reach across the micro, meso, and macro levels, enabling multiple relational examinations to be measured in tandem. Next is a review of the families of theories that drive the underlying premise of the network perspective.

Network theories of flow and architecture. The network perspective is made up of many families of network theories. At the core, network theories explain the relationships and resources shared, exchanged, or even depleted within the social world (Monge & Contractor, 2003). For example, researchers examine relationships and the flow of resources among those relationships such as when organizations trade supplies with other organizations (Burt, 2004), or

who helps who find employment opportunities (Granovetter, 1973), or who communicates with whom about certain matters (Marsden, 2005).

Two overarching theoretical models exist within the network perspective that helps best to convey the families of network theories: the network *flow* model and the network *architectural* model (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). The network flow model can be illustrated with Lin's (1999) social resource theory, which explains social resources flow more freely for nodes in a network who enjoy more connections. Put another way, the network flow model examines the interactions that flow through the network's ties connecting the network's nodes. The architecture model, on the other hand, reviews the structures of dependencies and positioning of nodes. The architecture of a network plays an interpretive role in reviewing outcomes (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). For example, an underlying component of the architecture of a network is the identification of where one node might be located or positioned within a network of other nodes. The more central and connected a node, the more opportunity that node has of acquiring goods and services (Borgatti et al., 2013; Burt, 2004) or connections to employment opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). In other words, a network's architecture reveals a node's ability to reach to other nodes to activate resources within its overall network.

The network flow model and the network architectural model add a richness to the study of social phenomena. For example, communication can notate both flow and architecture in a network. Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell (2011) offers the following example:

> Communication, even if plentiful, plays a role in the network architecture model that is different from its role in the network flow model. In the network flow model, it is the value of the flow itself that generates outcomes for the ego that receives it. A manager receives gossip about a failing project, and takes steps to disassociate herself from it. In

> the architecture model, it is the alignment between nodes produced by the flow that yields the outcome (p. 11).

Applied to this dissertation, the network flow model is the communication exchanges between people concerning sport. The network architecture model helps conceptualize the proportion of rival fans in an individual's social network. The network architectural model can also help identify how homogenous sport fans networks might be concerning demographic or other attribute, proximal, and relational data. To better understand these considerations, more on the clusters of theories and their attached conceptual frameworks should be explained.

As noted, an underlying broad range of sociological theories drives the network perspective. Monge and Contractor, (2003) offer the following list of network theory clusters: theories of self-interest and collective action; contagion, semantic, and cognitive theories; exchange and dependency theories; homophily, proximity, and social support theories; co-evolutionary and complex adaptive systems theories. These many theoretical clusters in one example of how the network perspective enriches the investigation of social phenomena: its ability to reach across network levels, and theoretical underpinnings (Contractor, Wasserman, & Faust, 2006; Monge & Contractor, 2003). Each of these clusters of theories can be applied to whole network reach or to ego network research. Ego network research, for example, often applies the theory cluster of homophily, proximity, and social support.

Both the flow and architectural models and the theoretical clusters can be additionally explained by applying them to two conceptual frameworks: social capital and social homogeneity (Borgatti & Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). Under social capital is capitalization and coordination. Capitalization explains how success is achieved through the flow of resources among ties, and reaches to the theory cluster of exchange and dependency theories. Coordination

examines the architectural structure for nodal success by how sub-networks group together. Coordination reaches to theories of self-interest and collective action. Social homogeneity includes contagion and adaption. Contagion reaches to the contagion, semantic, and cognitive theories to explain diffusion such as how ideas flow between nodes and aid in the adoption of attitudes. Finally, adaption examines the social homogeneity by exploring the architectural proximity of the nodes within a network. Adaption signifies a converging of similarities and reaches to co-evolutionary and complex adaptive systems theories.

Put most simply, networks help explain or examine the many ways in which entities and actors are interconnected (the architecture of a network) and the resources or depletion of resources that are exchanged among those relationships (the flows within a network). The application of a network perspective is driven by an underlying broad range of sociological theories, including those situated in exchange and dependency theories, contagion theories, and even homophily or co-evolution (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Communication can be examined in virtually any network perspective and spans application to both network models—whole and ego—and can be conceptualized across network theory clusters, too. Next, the analyses of these multidimensional networks are discussed.

Network analysis. Recall that networks are analyzed by examining the nodes or actors within the network, the ties that bind or the relationships that connect those nodes. Researchers can also examine the whole network to understand the flow or the architecture of the network. Oftentimes, however, it is uniplex data that is analyzed, meaning the investigation analyzes one role relation between or among nodes in a network. For instance, when research study who talks to whom, they are studying the uniplex relations of talking. Contractor, Wasserman, and Faust

(2006) offer an expanded conceptualization for the analysis of networks: multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis.

Multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis aids in controlling for as well as including relational variables that have a direct or even indirect relationship on other variables. Multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis moves beyond the uniplex data commonly measured in social science and even in networks, and offers an opportunity to examine the multiplex relationships that occur throughout social relationships (Monge & Contractor 2003). Multiplex relationships are conceptualized as, "having many role relations connecting two network members," which has become a suggested approach among network scholars (Bush et al., 2017; Feld, 1981; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010; Wellman, 1992).

Multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis aids in examining variables at each level of measurement and across relationships. Relationships are complex and network scholars recommend relationships be both captured and analyzed as relational systems: "social relationship processes cannot be fully understood when relationships are divorced from characteristics of individuals and those in their networks," (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, p. 124). Still, researchers cannot just simply throw all the collected variables into an analysis and hope for a significant relational outcome. Therefore, multiplex relationships can be examined across network levels by both carefully collecting attribute and relational data, and then analyzing those data in precise ways that keep intact the theoretical underpinnings originally driving the research.

The multi-theoretical facet of network analysis is not intended to saturate a study by applying many theoretical frameworks, but instead its intention is to protect the integrity of the data collected from such a premise. To explain, in egocentric networks researchers explore homophily, proximity, and social support. Homophily, as one theoretical principle may best be

suited to the collection of nodal attribute data. Proximity, as another theoretical principle, is better suited to drive the collection of dyadic relational data, and social support would inform the dyadic ties between nodes. Multi-theoretical analyses allow the researcher to then take these various types of data and relate them across various network levels and analyze them in tandem. In other words, analyzing data at the dyadic level (a tie between two nodes) of analysis, alongside the node level, and both within the context of the whole network level allows for a more interrelated, multilevel, examination of the social phenomena being investigated.

An analogy relating a multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis to this dissertation could include the homophily, proximity, and social support theoretical trilogy (Monge & Contractor, 2003). The homophily, proximity, and social support theoretical trilogy would hypothesize that the more similar, nearby, and supportive a node's connections, the more communication will flow from the node to his/her network connections. The antithesis to that is that communication would flow less freely among members of a network made up of dissimilar, far away connections, who are unsupportive. These concepts could be researched by asking individuals who they speak to about sport, if those people are fans of the same or rival team, and if individuals reach to similar fans for emotional support following a team loss or avoid rival fans following a team loss. Multi-theoretical analysis would allow these variables to be measured in tandem to identify the flow and architecture of a network of people who discuss sport and where people find support or avoid unsupportive situations. The addition of attribute data concerning the nodes into that investigation can help identify in more detail the multiplex relationships and dyadic ties between the nodes, and then an assessment all of these matters across the whole network of nodes could offer a multilevel analysis to identify who is likely to seeks out whom to speak to about sport.

Multilevel analysis helps to maintain the measurement integrity of relationships, attitudes, and beliefs inherent in the relational and attribute variables measured in social science research (Borgatti et al., 2013; Contractor et al., 2006; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). In contrast, single level analysis (node or dyadic level) measures a network of connected nodes that are directed or undirected in relation to each other (Tranmer, Pallotti, & Lomi, 2016). In other words, multilevel analysis enables the investigation of a wider range of interconnected phenomena.

To understand network analysis and multi-theoretical, multilevel analysis in particular, an explanation of graph theorem, upon which the network perspective is based, is necessary. Networks are conceptualized mathematically as graphs (Borgatti et al., 2013). Network graph-theory is made up of two sets of data: vertices and edges. Vertices (which are the nodes in a network) are connected by edges (or ties), and the number of edges equals that vertices' degree (or frequency of connections). The paths and distances between vertices are also measured, which helps further define the architectural and flow models. Contractor et al., (2006) explains that any number of square graph matrices could result from researching a network. An analogy of this could be a kaleidoscope and each turn, or data set, rearranges the pieces to display in a different array. The families of network theories guide the perspective or approach of the researcher and the resultant graph displays as differing data depending upon the theory family applied will appear as a result.

Each graph represents a single relation, but often there can be many relational edges connecting to the same vertices (e.g. multiplex relationships). Matrices are used to sort data in symmetrical or asymmetrical formats that depict co-occurrences or other relational ties (Borgatti et al., 2013; Monge & Contractor, 2003). In other words, this dissertation can examine the

relational ties between an individual and similar or rival fans. These unique sets of graph-theory mathematical calculations can identify node positions in a network, how those positions effect other nodes in the network, and can examine the node's multiplex relationships with that network.

In sum, the methods, levels, models, theory clusters, and analyses that make up the network perspective are multifaceted and complex. This dissertation integrates the above network underpinnings and applies each to an ego network analysis that examines the communication between egos and their alters concerning sport and sport-crisis. An overview of egocentric networks, and more specifically egocentric discussion networks which is the specific network method applied in this dissertation, is offered in the next section of this chapter.

Egocentric Network Analysis

As mentioned in the network perspective overview in the prior section of this chapter, the personal network method design features a sample of respondents (egos) and relational data about their reported alters (Borgatti et al., 2013). The ego is asked specific questions to build the specified network the researcher sets out to analyze.

Alters, those to whom an ego is relationally connected, are collected by asking the ego direct questions related to the point of the research. In this dissertation, that question could be: "Who do you speak to about sport?" Ego networks examine the relational data between the ego and its alters as well as the interrelations among the ego's alters (Borgatti et al., 2013; Halgin & Borgatti, 2012). Social relational data can include attribute and relational variables including role-based relationships [mother, friend, rival fan], cognitive-affective relationships [knows, likes], and action-based relationships [talks to, aids] (Borgatti et al., 2013). The relational data

collection for this dissertation will include multiplex relationships including whether the ego and his/her alters are NFL fans, rivals or nonfans, for example.

Ego networks are situated within the network theory family of homophily, proximity, and social support (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Homophily theories include social comparison and social identity, as well as cognitive consistency theories like balance theory and cognitive dissonance (Contractor et al., 2006). Homophily, which is defined as people most closely similar to our social selves, can be assumed a limitation in ego networks because homophily is a "remarkably consistent" selection process (Borgatti et al., 2013; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 429). Homophily aligns with the typical socio-demographic characteristic such as gender, ethnicity, religion, income, education, and even political ideologies and partisanship (Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad, McClurg, & Rolfe, 2009; McPherson et al., 2001). However, homophily in ego networks can also be perceived a strength because homophily reduces conflict and increases communication because of similar or homogeneous viewpoints and backgrounds (Borgatti et al., 2013; Monge & Contractor, 2003). This dissertation proposes that homophily is tested when fan-to-rival communication is activated when discussing sport and sport crisis, To better explain, this dissertation explores whether tie activation occurs from the ego to a rival fan alter when blasting or schadenfreude is communicated.

Proximity is a multifaceted concept within the network perspective. Proximity can reach to the architecture of a network—how closes nodes are to each other or how between a node is from other nodes in the network. In ego networks, proximity reaches more to the physical proximity of individuals within their social world and how that proximity shapes an ego's social network. It is important to note here that proximity does not necessary correlate with relationship closeness (Wellman & Wortley, 1990), but proximity certainly facilitates relationship

interactions with neighbors and coworkers, for example (Bush, Walker & Perry, 2017; Feld, 1981; McPherson et al., 2001). Proximity relates to social cohesion, which in turn, relates to social support (Feld, 1981; McPherson et al., 2001; Perkins, Subramanian, & Christakis, 2015).

Social support is widely studied in ego network research focused on outcomes (Bush et al., 2017), especially among an array of health outcomes (Perkins et al., 2015), including mental health access to care (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015). Social support comes from proximal alters such as kin, friends, or neighbors and can include support such as help with childcare, (McPherson et al., 2001; Perkins et al., 2015; Wellman, 1992). Social support also leads to the concept of multiplex relationships, which is "having many role relations connecting two network members," (Wellman, 1992). Bush, Walker, and Perry (2017) found multiplex relationships among kin and friends, and note that these relationships provide social support across contexts. Wellman and Wortley (1990) described an array of six types of social support that network members might provide for an ego, but Perry, Pescosolido and Borgatti (2018) note that past research shows that social support is so diverse that it is nearly impossible to truly measure without captured a whole, closed network, while accounting for reciprocity. This dissertation is limited in reach and unable to capture a whole network so social support is not directly measured.

In sum, an individual's offline and online social network is informed by homophily, proximity, and social support, which can be examined for a multitude of information relating to perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. More precisely, ego networks measure how people discuss certain topics, the affective and behavioral exchanges that occur between ties, and an ego network can depict specific role relations and activations (Borgatti et al., 2013; Marsden, 2005). Ego networks allow the exploration of multilevel analyses of relational, attribute, and

explanatory data in tandem concerning the communication between the ego and his/her alters. This dissertation applies the ego network perspective to analyze the current offline and online social networks of stakeholders to gauge stakeholders' perceptions of crisis by examining the activation of certain network ties through communication. Therefore, this dissertation proposes an egocentric discussion network analysis.

Discussion networks are discussed in detail in the sections following, but first it is important to talk about the preciseness in measuring egocentric networks. In virtually every aspect of egocentric network data collection and subsequent analysis are the considerations of which network method or theoretical underpinnings to apply. Also, reaching to multilevel analysis and multiplex relationships, it is imperative for the network perspective researcher to apply functional specificity. Functional specificity is an underlying research hypothesis that helps guide the research of networks to analyze certain functions in specific ways. The next section explains this guiding framework.

Functional Specificity Hypothesis

Researchers can examine ego networks for the ways in which people activate ties with certain others to meet specific needs (Weiss, 1974). People "shop" their social networks for specific others for specific types of aid (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Four types of aid that people seek include emotional aid, services, financial aid, and companionship (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). The predictors for seeking out of various types of aid from certain alters include relationship closeness, proximity (whether the ego and alter live nearby to each other), and frequency of contact such as how often the ego and the alters speak face-to-face or on the telephone (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Social scientists call this activation of ties for specific needs a functional specificity. The functional

specificity hypothesis (FSH) investigates which people an ego reaches to for specific needs to be met or for discussing particular matters.

Functional specificity should drive egocentric discussion network research because there are considerations and implications to both method and theory concerning particular tie activations and outcomes (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). To explain, specificity is necessary for measurement because, for example, more than one discussion domain is required for a more complete understanding of the differences in the network's flows and architecture. For example, Perry and Pescosolido (2010) examined important matters discussion networks and health matters discussion networks, and while the two demonstrated overlap, key findings were situated among the differences between the two networks. Moreover, health was not perceived as an important matter, so specific and deliberate conveyance of matters during alter data collection is imperative for precise measurements. FSH also distinguishes between social integration with those who are similar to the ego and social regulation from specialized discussants such as medical or health professionals. Linking an ego's social network with outcomes also highlights the importance of FSH's connection with network theories. Perry and Pescosolido (2010) note, "the verbal exchange of information, opinions, and advice may be a critical mechanism" in navigating crisis situations in health (p. 355).

To relate the FSH perspective to this research, three specific discussion networks are measured: important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters. Role-topic dependency (Bearman & Parigi, 2004) is explored across all three discussion networks by asking egos a series of questions concerning to whom they talk to about specific important matters, sport matters, and concerning specific, detailed sport-related crisis matters. The network flows, tie

activations, and architecture can then be examined across the three discussion networks and social integration or regulation can be assessed.

The application of FSH in this dissertation also focuses on the communication and support exchanges between the ego and offline and online alters, fellow and rival fans, and even acquaintances. Specifically, tie activation is assessed among core and peripheral alters to explain in detail the nuances specific to sport communication exchanges and stakeholders' perceptions. In other words, the characteristic differences an ego activates within his/her social network for sport and sport crisis discussions are explored (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010, 2015). The specific ego network this dissertation will capture and measure is a discussion network. In other words, this dissertation will capture how egos discuss certain topics (i.e. sport) with the people they know. The next section describes discussion networks and then overviews the types of topical discussion networks that have been studied to date.

Discussion Networks

To date, network analyses have been applied in sport to explore leadership within sport teams (Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, Loughead, Vanbeselaere, De Cuyper, Broek, & Boen, 2015), team structure (Lusher, Robins & Kremer, 2010), and connectedness between teams in a community (MacLean, Cousens, & Barnes, 2011). Most closely related to the current study were two Twitter-based analyses that investigated the spread of sport information and news coverage of sport-related topics (Hambrick, 2012; Hambrick & Sanderson, 2013). None have applied ego network analysis, however, nor have any sport-related studies measured egocentric discussion networks. This study fills that void.

This section defines and reviews discussion networks. Discussion networks have been conducted on important matters, health matters, and political matters, and the seminal studies on

each topic is discussed. A description of functional specificity hypothesis and the importance of careful construction of name generators for core and peripheral network data collection also are presented.

Discussion networks measure shared connections and the communication of beliefs and attitudes (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Burt, 2004, 1986, 1984; Bush et al., 2017; Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad, et al., 2009; Marsden, 1987; Perkins et al., 2015; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). Discussion network investigations collect relational, attribute, and explanatory data about egos (who are the focal actors) and the egos' alters (the nodes who make up the egos' social network). Data collection for discussion networks usually are collected via a survey instrument delivered either in person or online (Burt, 1986; Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perkins et al., 2015; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). Three relationship exchange characteristics are commonly captured when surveying egos: role-based relationships [mother, friend], cognitive-affective relationships [knows, likes], and action-based relationships [talks to, aids] (Borgatti et al., 2013). Discussion networks are constructed upon egos' perception and reporting of the alters they identify in their networks. Some researchers note this as a limitation (Burt, 1986; Marsden, 2005, 1987) while others use that data to measure egos' outcomes (Bush et al., 2017; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). Several social functions can be measured and analyzed through discussion networks including communication exchange, sense-making, social control, access to resources, and behaviors (Borgatti et al., 2013; Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010).

Longitudinal studies like the General Social Survey (GSS) utilize a discussion network to assess to whom people talk about important matters (Bearman & Parigi, 2004; Bernard, Johnsen, Killworth, McCarty, Shelley, & Robinson, 1990; Burt, 1986; Marsden, 1987; Straits, 2000;

Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Important matters discussion networks examine to whom people go to for advice and support on important matters.

Political matters discussion networks. Discussion networks research most recently extended beyond important matters to focus on political matters. Political matters discussion network studies seek out with whom people discuss politics and measures how much insight people have concerning political ideologies (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad et al., 2009). Series of questions concerning political connections (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad et al., 2009) and even perceived voting history and likelihood (Bello & Rolfe, 2014) are asked of the ego to report about the alters identified as discussants. Interestingly, egos continue discussions with spouses of differing political views more than with those who held the same political views (Bello & Rolfe, 2014). Fragility of a relationship resulted in less frequently shared political views, however, and purposive selective disclosure and consistent homophily in political matters discussion networks has repeatedly been reported (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; Klofstad et al., 2009).

In fact, Eveland and Kleinman (2013) set out to specifically investigate homophily in a comparison study of political matters and important matters. Both discussion network structures were similar and the politically focused measurements among the important matters network strongly predicted the political homophily of the political matters discussion network. Klofstad, et al., (2009) also tested homophily between important matters and political matters and found the two to also be similar in size and overlapping. The authors conducted tests of differences and every measurement resulted in non-significant t-tests among the attribute and explanatory variables of each of the two discussion networks.

Homophily is a common limitation in the data gathering process of discussion networks and health matters discussion networks are not immune, even though they have been more widely studied to date than political matters. The next section provides an overview of the more in-depth research that has been conducted on health matters discussion networks, and the resultant further understanding these studies have offered on the benefits of personal social networks for improved health outcomes.

Health matters discussion networks. Health matters discussion networks have emerged over the past 15 years (Perkins et al., 2015). Topics in health matters discussion network studies range from contraception use and family planning, to disease transmission, community support, and mental health (Perkins et al., 2013; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). Perry and Pescosolido (2010) note that a large network of strong ties results in improved health outcomes. Improved health outcomes are due in part to the support the ego receives from his/her alters. Reaching back to Granovetter's (1973) weak ties, their study highlighted how the egos in this study benefitted by accessing peripheral bridges to receive additional aid, education, and health services (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). The combination of tie activation from the core network and the core's activation of bridging its periphery made healthcare and other needs more accessible to the ego.

Perkins et al., (2015) conducted a meta-analysis review of published egocentric health matters discussion network studies (N = 17) and found that discussion network analyses were most commonly limited to tie type. In other words, these studies only measured the connection between an ego and the ego's alters, most often focused on advice or support. What was lacking from these studies were multilevel analyses, reciprocity, and the examination of overlap between subnetworks. Perry and Pescosolido (2010) filled the subnetworks gap by investigating important matters, health matters, and the overlap of the two.

Perry and Pescosolido (2015) later found the roles alters play in an ego's social network to be functionally specific. For example, a regulator role is present in health matters discussion networks. Typically, the regulator role is activated along strong relationship ties with frequent communication and is most commonly the ego's spouse or mother (Bush et al., 2017; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015). The researchers used a multilevel analysis of "two distinct analytic levels and four conceptual levels," (p. 119) to figure this out. Multilevel analysis of discussion networks helps identify such nuances by allowing for relational and attribute data to be measured in tandem, which in Perry and Pescosolido's work helped uncover the importance and richness of functional specificity.

This dissertation applies multi-theoretical multilevel analyses to examine the multiplex relationships by collecting relational and attribute data, exploring reciprocity, and investigating the overlap between discussion subnetworks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Perkins et al., 2015). Furthermore, functional specificity hypothesis, which informs the best practices in egocentric discussion network analyses, guides the current research.

In each of the important matters, political matters, and health matters discussion networks, people most often turn to those with whom they are closest to meet their needs. This dissertation will test homophily and proximity in unique and exciting new ways. For example, sports are a widely discussed topic and therefore might prove less homogeneous than past discussion network analyses. Expanding egocentric network data to include both offline and online social contacts will test proximity. Overall, this dissertation fills a void in egocentric networks and discussion networks by investigating sport matters and sport crisis matters egocentric discussion networks.

Chapter Synopsis

In sum, the theoretical framework of situational crisis communication theory guides this dissertation. More precisely, stakeholders' perceptions are assessed in two ways: as crisis perceptions and as reputational outcomes. SCCT also interrelates in this research with the conceptual components of sport identification and fan behaviors for an in-depth exploration of the affective and behavioral outcomes related to crisis. In so doing, this dissertation connects the psychological perceptions of stakeholders and examines how their behavioral outcomes might differ when asked about sport in general and about sport-related crises. This dissertation further explores whether individual (fanship) and social (fandom) identification shapes stakeholders' perceptions and how fan behaviors are specifically communicated in response to real-life crisis occurrences. This combination of crisis perceptions, sport identification, and fan behaviors in response to sport-related concepts and crises fills a gap in the crisis communication, sport communication, and fan behaviors' bodies of literature. Moreover, this research serves to advance theory, method, and practice in crisis communication and sport through the unique application of an egocentric discussion network analyses.

This dissertation extends current network literature by conducting an egocentric discussion network analysis, informed by functional specificity hypothesis, to explore the multiplex relationships and specific discussions that occur regarding sport and sport-related crises. A network perspective fills a gap in the crisis literature by demonstrating the specific activations of already existent offline and online social networks when discussing sport and sport-related crisis. An egocentric network analysis also allows for a more precise examination of stakeholders' perceptions, identification, and resultant behaviors and allows for multi-

theoretical multilevel analyses of these theoretical and conceptual variables to be measured in tandem.

Taken together, stakeholders' perceptions, identification, fan behaviors, and egocentric discussion networks comingle to create a unique set of research questions. Directional hypotheses also test this dissertation's distinctive foci. The research questions and directional hypotheses are explained and presented in the next section.

Research Questions

This dissertation seeks answers related to stakeholders' perceptions, and whether or how identification with the entity or actor involved in the crisis might result in differing perceptions. Moreover, this dissertation explores a variety of fan behaviors to identify how stakeholders' perceptions are expressed through interpersonal communication. Both fan and nonfan offline and online social networks were captured through an egocentric network analysis and the combination measurement of stakeholders' perceptions, identification, and fan behaviors will help to parse out the nuances related to sport-related discussions and sport-related crisis discussions in an effort to assess the outcomes of stakeholders' perceptions as word-of-mouth (Coombs, 2007a).

Several research questions are posited to drive this research. The research questions are based upon the construction of knowledge gathered from the combined literature shared in the above sections of this chapter. The research questions are theoretically rooted in SCCT, conceptually rooted to prior research on identification and fan behaviors, and methodologically rooted within the network perspective. Furthermore, this dissertation seeks these answers within the targeted framework of sport, and more specifically, the National Football League (NFL).

Stakeholders' perceptions. The stakeholders' perceptions pertaining to four sport-related crises in the NFL was assessed in this dissertation (one case per respondent): concussions/CTE, Deflategate, Ezekiel Elliot, and Colin Kaepernick/#TakeaKnee (please see appendix B for a brief synopsis of each crisis). Stakeholders' perceptions are divided into two main, overarching categories of investigation: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes (Coombs, 2007a). Crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes were measured along the three structural layers inherent in the NFL: league, team, and athlete. Please note that this extends the typical organizational or individual levels most commonly studied in sport crises (Fortunato, 2008; Wenner, 2013). These levels aid in precise and targeted crisis attribution to better investigate crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes in an attempt to extend the study of sport crisis communication. As such, the following research question relating to stakeholders' perceptions is explored:

RQ1: What are the crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes regarding NFL crises among NFL stakeholders?

Identification. Identification in this dissertation includes the exploration of both social identification with sport—fandom (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010); and individual identification with a NFL team—fanship (Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1990). Both are measured and analyzed alongside stakeholders' perceptions of crisis (Coombs, 2014, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay 2008, 2006). This portion of the study connects to SCCT's assessment factor: relational history (Coombs, 2007a, 2001). As such, the following identification questions are asked:

RQ2: **(a)** What is the extent of sport identification among the respondents of this study?

(b) How does sport identification associate with stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL

crises? **(c)** Is sport identification a predictor of stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL crises?

This dissertation is especially focused on investigating whether and how fanship and fandom levels correlate with, or even predict, stakeholders' perceptions. Wann (2006) noted that sport fans feel a personal threat to their own social identity when others negatively perceive a sport entity with which they closely identify. This is because highly identified fans invest a lot of themselves into their beloved team, and not only do they individually identify with the team but they also socially identify with the other fans (Wann et al., 2001). Moreover, a whole body of research has explored the ways in which sport fans actively engage in image management (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Jensen et al., 2016; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann et al., 2001). This dissertation hypothesizes that crisis, like game losses, not only poses the same threats to sport fans' identity but also results in the same need to actively control such identity threats. As such, to compliment the research questions regarding sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions, and to test past research findings at the praxis of fandom, fanship, and crises, the following hypotheses are tested:

H1a: Higher fandom levels will result in more positive crisis perceptions.

H1b: Higher fandom levels will result in positive reputation perceptions at the league, team and athlete levels.

H2a: Higher fanship levels will result in more positive crisis perceptions.

H2b: Higher fanship levels will result in positive reputation perceptions at the league, team and athlete levels.

Fan behaviors. Three fan behaviors are measured for each respondent or ego. Each fan behavior is measured in response to game outcomes, crises, and within the sport and sport crisis

discussion networks as communicated fan behaviors. The fan behaviors measured include CORFing (Campbell et al., 2004; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Jensen et al., 2016; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990), Blasting (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011), and Schadenfreude (Cikara, 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Leach 2015, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009). Fan behaviors have been noted to highly correlate with fandom and fanship (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and this dissertation examines those nuances in tandem with stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises and sport identification. As such, the following research questions are asked regarding fan behaviors:

RQ3: **(a)** In what ways do fan behavior measurements associate with sport identification?

(b) In what ways are fan behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions associated?

Schadenfreude is operationalized in this dissertation in two ways (1) as an emotional response to crisis (e.g. joy at another's adversity), and (2) as a communicated pleasure in rival game losses or repercussions of crisis. Schadenfreude is therefore measured as an emotional response, as well as a communicated behavior in response to crisis-related perceptions. The first measurement of schadenfreude rests within the general sense of sport rivalry—meaning that fans find joy in a rival team's loss of a game (Cikara, 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Leach 2015, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009). The second measurement of schadenfreude includes a specific focus toward sport crises stakeholders' perceptions (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012).

The following research question is first presented regarding schadenfreude in response to sport rivalry and sport-related crises (see also, H6):

RQ3c: Does schadenfreude in response to sport crises differ from the other crisis emotions of sympathy and anger?

Fan-to-rival fan behaviors coupled with schadenfreude provides a unique new platform on which to investigate sport-related crises. We know that schadenfreude is driven by envy and schadenfreude is a discordant expression of feelings of pleasure in regard to a misfortune experienced by others (Cikara, 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Leach 2015, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009). Past research has also shown that sport fans enjoy seeing their rivals suffer repercussions from prior wrongdoings (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). Therefore, if schadenfreude is a third crisis emotion that is fully departed from sympathy (Coombs, 2014, 2007a), then this dissertation hypothesizes that sport fans will take great joy in watching adversity befall their rival teams. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3: Schadenfreude will significantly correlate with negative crisis perceptions and negative reputational outcomes.

Egocentric discussion networks. Ego networks also are a key aspect of this dissertation. An egocentric discussion network analysis is a unique way to investigate a stakeholder's existing offline and online social network and explore the contagion of communication and perceptions (Borgatti et al., 2013). Which ties an ego activates to discuss important matters, sport matters or sport crisis matters can help inform how information diffuses through social networks while delineating the functional specificity between the three discussion networks (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). This dissertation sets out to explore whether sport matters and sport crisis matters discussion networks offer nuanced insight into how sport and sport crises might be perceived and communicated by stakeholders. As such, the following research questions are posited:

RQ4: (a) What is the composition of an egocentric sport discussion network? (b) What is the composition of stakeholders' egocentric sport crisis discussion network? (c) How do

the sport and sport crisis discussion networks differ from egos' important matters network?

Sport identification and fan behaviors in offline and online social networks have not yet been captured in past research. This exploratory research leads to several questions, especially pertaining to sport crisis.

Sport crisis discussion network. This dissertation set out to specifically explore how stakeholders communicate about sport crises. When a sport crisis occurs involving a beloved team, fans may exercise regressive information-seeking and communication tendencies such as CORFing (Campbell et al., 2004; Spinda, 2011). If a crisis happens for a rival fan, however, the crisis could provide fodder for blasting or "talking trash" (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011). Schadenfreude, joy at another's adversity, is another possibility when crisis strikes a rival team; similar to when a rival team loses a game (Cikara et al., 2011; Cikara & Fiske, 2012; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Leach 2015, 2003; Leach & Spears, 2009). This dissertation explores how these fan behaviors might be applied to sport crisis perceptions (Coombs 2014, 2007). If schadenfreude is in fact actively occurring between rivals concerning sport crises, then this research can explore how those feelings of schadenfreude might correlate with a reduction in perceived crisis seriousness. Schadenfreude could therefore conceptually open a research trajectory into the *positive* perceptions of crisis, especially in sport (Weiner, 2008, 2006, 1986). The answers to these research questions will help identify the specific mechanisms related to how sport crises are perceived and discussed and how they differ among stakeholders.

The following research questions uniquely explore stakeholders' perceptions, identification, and fan behaviors from a network perspective.

RQ5: (a) How are fan behaviors communicated within the sport-related discussion networks? (b) In what way does sport identification associate with the activation of fan behaviors in the sport-related discussion networks? (c) In what ways does the composition of the sport crisis discussion network influence stakeholders' perceptions through sport identification and fan behaviors?

Several hypotheses can be tested within this research method pertaining to the bridging of self-reported psychological measurements and the functionally specific reporting of behavior. As Wann (2006) argues, team identification is much more about the important relationships fans bridge with other fellow fans than it is about the actual sport itself. Moreover, research shows that social connectedness through fandom (and even fanship) results in increased psychological heath (Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2001). Egocentric networks are also known to benefit social and psychological wellbeing (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010), so it only makes sense that the connections among socially connected sport fans would result in beneficial social, emotional, and communicative ties. As such, the following hypotheses are extended:

$H4_a$: Individuals higher in fandom or fanship will have stronger, more active ties to fellow fans.

$H4_b$: Individuals higher in fandom or fanship will have weaker ties with rival fans and will activate those ties less frequently than fellow fan tie activation.

H5: Individuals higher in fandom or fanship are more likely to communicate fan behaviors within their sport crisis discussion network.

As past research has noted, watching rivals perform poorly in games (Cikara et al., 2011), and hearing about repercussions (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012) in relation to wrongdoings (i.e. suspensions or loss of sponsors), have both resulted in displays of envy toward a winning

rival team or a team or athlete of perceivably higher status. For these reasons, a final hypothesis is presented:

H6: The presence of schadenfreude in response to sport crises will not significantly differ from egos' reported schadenfreude in general sport rivalry.

Overall, this research explores stakeholders' perceptions, identification operationalized as sport fanship and sport fandom, fan behaviors, and how and to whom stakeholders talk to about important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters throughout their offline and online social networks. The combination of these areas were explored through a unique research design, an egocentric discussion network analysis, to identify the existing offline and online social networks and the specific connections that are activated when discussing sport and sport crisis matters. The questions posited here will drive this dissertation research. The next chapter explains in detail the methods applied to carry out this research and the measures that will help capture the data necessary to answer these questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The previous chapter shared the construction of knowledge that situates the overall premise of this dissertation. This section integrates the literature on situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), identification, fan behaviors, and the network perspective to analytically answer the research questions asked at the end of the previous chapter. This chapter details the methods and measurements applied to extend the literature through answering the research questions. See Table 3.1 for full listing of research questions and modes of analysis.

This dissertation's approach included the use of one data collection instrument with two primary methods. The survey combined traditional measurements of stakeholders' perceptions with egocentric networks to measure stakeholders' perceptions and their subsequent communicative behaviors. The survey aided in assessing the psychological perceptions of identification felt by stakeholders and the egocentric discussion network analysis examined the communicated fan behaviors of stakeholders. This connected the psychological and sociological measurements, both of which are necessary to this dissertation's focus, and therefore necessitate the integration of these two complimentary methods.

Table 3.1. *Research Questions, Method, and Analytic Procedures*

Research Questions	**Data Collection Method Levels of Measurement**	**Mode of Analysis**
RQ1: What are the crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes regarding NFL crises among NFL stakeholders?	Survey Instrument	univariate statistics, principal components analysis (PCA), Cronbach's alpha, correlations
RQ2: (a) What is the extent of sport identification among the respondents of this study? (b) How does sport identification associate with stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL crises? (c) Is sport identification a predictor of stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL crises?	Survey Instrument IV: fandom, fanship DV: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes [x3 levels]	univariate statistics, principal components analysis (PCA), Cronbach's alpha, correlations, linear regression
RQ3: **(a)** In what ways do fan behavior measurements associate with sport identification? **(b)** In what ways are fan behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions associated? **(c)** Does schadenfreude in response to sport crises differ from the other crisis emotions of sympathy and anger?	Survey Instrument IV: fandom, fanship, crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes [x3 levels] DV: CORFing, Blasting, Schadenfreude as fan rivalry, schadenfreude as emotional response to crisis, sympathy, anger	univariate statistics, Cronbach's alpha, correlations, paired t-tests
RQ4: (a) What is the composition of an egocentric sport discussion network? (b) What is the composition of stakeholders' egocentric sport crisis discussion network? (c) In what ways do the sport and sport crisis discussion networks differ from egos' important matters network?	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis [Network Level: (a) all 3 discussion networks; (b-c) 2 sport-related discussion networks] IV: demos of discussion networks DV: egos/alters: tie activation	univariate statistics, correlations, crosstabs/chi-square, paired t-tests, network composition, homophily
RQ5: **(a)** How are fan behaviors communicated within the sport-related discussion networks? **(b)** In what way does sport identification associate with the activation of fan behaviors in the sport-related discussion networks? **(c)** In what ways does the composition of the sport crisis discussion network influence stakeholders' perceptions through sport identification and fan behaviors?	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: fandom, fanship, fan behaviors, crisis perceptions, reputational outcomes, crisis emotions DV: tie activation/communication of fan behaviors, crisis emotions	univariate statistics, correlations, chi-square, paired t-tests, OLS regression, MLM [nested data]

Past research on crisis communication has most commonly focused on rhetorical, retrospective case study analyses or experimental designs testing reactions to crisis responses (Avery et al., 2010; Coombs, 2014; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015). This dissertation's

focus reached beyond the crisis response focus and instead applied the combined methods of a traditional social science survey with a network analysis to explore stakeholders' perceptions (crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes) to answer RQ1. RQ2 was addressed by examining the levels of identification and the ways in which identification might associate with those perceptions. Moreover, by answering RQ3, the coupling of fan behaviors with an egocentric discussion network additionally traveled that bridge filling a void in the fan behavior literature by adding a network perspective to a body commonly examined through surveys and experiments (Jensen et al., 2016). The traditional survey measured these beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of respondents (Feldman & Lynch, 1988) and bridged that psychological impetus of identification to stakeholders' perceptions, and then examined how both associate with the sociological outcomes of fan behaviors and communication in an individual's social network (Krosnick & Petty, 1995).

Krosnick and Petty (1995) note beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior are spontaneously activated and influence each other in a fixed causal hierarchy. For example, beliefs are integrated into overall affective reactions, which influence intentions and are the immediate antecedents of behavior (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Attitude to behavior consistency has been gauged by measuring people's attitudes and then observing behavior, and by measuring reports of past or intended behavior alongside attitude measurement (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). This dissertation bridged attitude to behavior by gathering beliefs and attitudes in the survey method with observing or capturing past or intended behavior—operationalized as communication—with the egocentric discussion network analysis.

The egocentric network analysis extended the traditional social science survey and answered $RQ4_{a\text{-}c}$ by additionally capturing data on recall or intention of conversation likelihood

on specific matters with specific individuals. This portion of the research involved the capture and assessment of existing offline and online social networks of individuals and the relationships they activated when communicating about sport and about sport crisis (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). This additional behavioral and relational data collection filled a void in the discussion network literature by adding a sport-specific assessment and extending knowledge in the crisis communication literature by examining the diffusion of word-of-mouth following a crisis, which also addresses $RQ4_{a\text{-}c}$, $RQ5_{a\text{-}c}$, and H4-6.

This chapter is structured in two overarching topics the more traditional social science survey measurements and the egocentric discussion network survey measurements. First, the measurements are explained for stakeholders' perceptions, sport identification, and fan behaviors, which answer RQ1-3, and $H1_a$-H3 (see Table 3.2 for fill listing of hypotheses). Then, the egocentric discussion network measurements applied to capture the important matters discussion network, the sport discussion network, and the sport crisis discussion network are presented.

Table 3.2. *Hypotheses Testing, Method, and Analytic Procedures*

Hypotheses	**Data Collection Method Levels of Measurement**	**Mode of Analysis**
H1a/H1b: Higher fandom levels will result in more positive crisis perceptions/positive reputational outcomes perceptions at the league, team and athlete levels.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: fandom | demos DV: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes [x3 levels]	ANOVA
H2a/H2b: Higher fanship levels will result in more positive crisis perceptions/positive reputational outcomes perceptions at the league, team and athlete levels.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: fanship | demos – egos/alters DV: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes [x3 levels]	ANOVA
H3: Schadenfreude will significantly correlate with negative crisis perceptions and negative reputational assessment.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes [x3 levels] DV: Schadenfreude as fan rivalry, schadenfreude as emotional response to crisis	Pearson correlation
$H4_a$/ $H4_b$: Individuals higher in fandom or fanship will have stronger, more active ties to fellow fans; weaker ties with rival fans, and will activate those ties less frequently than fellow fan tie activation.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: fandom/fanship |fan/rival | demos – egos/alters DV: communication frequency, relationship closeness, time known, and sport interrelator	2-level, mixed model linear regression
H5: Individuals higher in fandom or fanship are more likely to communicate fan behaviors within their sport crisis discussion network.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis IV: fandom/fanship |fan/rival | demos – egos/alters DV: CORFing, Blasting, Schadenfreude	2-level, mixed model linear regression
H6: The presence of schadenfreude in response to sport crises will not significantly differ from egos' reported schadenfreude in general sport rivalry.	Survey Instrument + Discussion Network Analysis DV: Schadenfreude – egos/ Schadenfreude – as alter tie activation	Independent and paired t-tests [select cases: sport discussion network v. sport crisis discussion network]

A summary of egocentric network analysis data formatting completes this chapter, but before moving on to measurements, the method carried out to conduct this research is first explained. Following is a review of the survey procedures.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument for this dissertation captured both the standard measurements of the beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Feldman & Lynch, 1988) specifically surrounding sport and crisis, identification, and fan behaviors; and it doubled as the data collection tool for the egocentric discussion network analysis. Survey instruments are the most widely applied tools for gathering primary source data for ego networks (Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, 2013; Marsden, 2005). Survey instruments also are most often used for egocentric discussion network studies, and are commonly delivered as either a qualitative in-person interview or as a paper or online survey (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Burt, 2004, 1986, 1984; Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perkins et al., 2015; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). The survey instrument was developed from a prior instrument (Saffer, 2016) and delivered as an online questionnaire. Following are the detailed procedures.

Survey Procedures

An online national survey was conducted. This study aimed for a random representative sample from the U.S. population. The current U.S. population is 326.2 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Therefore, a sample size of 1,067 respondents was necessary for a 95% confidence level, with +/-3% confidence interval, and a 50% value across measurements (). The targeted population included Americans who were sport fans (AP, 2014), both male and female, and over age 18.

Data collection service. The survey instrument was created in Qualtrics, an online survey software platform. The survey was tested for usability, understandability, and to practice and test statistical clarity and measurement of analyses. The official survey launched through Qualtrics data collection services. Qualtrics offers a web-based survey platform where

respondents who are representative of the general population are recruited to participate in online survey research panels.

Qualtrics was arguably a non-probability sample because not every American citizen had an equal or zero chance of inclusion because not every American is a registered respondent as a Qualtrics panelist. Still, Qualtrics provided guaranteed respondent verification and a soft watch over the initial launch for data quality. The soft watch was conducted to work out any usability issues that arose. For example, if respondents skipped over questions or if components of the survey were not operating or not appearing properly, troubleshooting could be conducted. The soft launch also aided in screening for "speeders." The survey duration time was set to screen for speeders at nine minutes, which was approximately one-third of the average survey completion time of 32.4 minutes. Therefore, those who neared survey completion at nine minutes were automatically terminated from the survey. Straightliners, those who answer all ones or all sevens for example, were also screened out.

Qualtrics incentivized respondents, which was necessary because of the high respondent burden of the egocentric discussion network data collection. The Qualtrics survey panel respondents were incentivized by awards points to complete the survey. Qualtrics handled all offers and incentives. No incentives were extended by the principal investigator.

Survey launch. Once the soft watch was completed; the survey launched through Qualtrics data collection services during week 16 of the NFL's regular season (Dec. 20, 2017). An initial screener question asked potential respondents whether they were sport fans and only those who responded yes were allowed to proceed. Response quotas were set for each day's data collection, which occurred at different times of the day and different days of each week. Data

collection concluded the week of wildcard play-off games (Jan. 8, 2018). A total of 1,106 survey responses remained after all data cleaning was complete.

Survey Sample

The goal of the survey was to capture a nationally representative sample of American sports fans. This goal was accomplished according to the reported demographics of survey respondents (N = 1,106). The demographic information collected included age, gender, ethnicity, income, education, and political ideology and partisanship (see Table 3.3). The descriptive statistics of each demographic follows.

Demographics. The mean *age* of respondents was 46.29 years (SD = 17.12). The median age of all Americans, including children less than 18 years, is 37.7 years, according to the US Census (2016). More males (n = 648) responded to the survey than females (n = 456), which reflected a 59/41 percent split on *gender*. This differs by 10% from the US average of a 49/51-gender split (US Census, 2016). Inclusivity of both males and females was important for this study to guard against frame errors commonly found in past sport-related research (Moy & Murphy, 2016; Spinda, 2011), and that goal was achieved.

Ethnic diversity was not present among respondents as the majority (77%) of respondents were Caucasian (n = 852). African Americans (n = 123) made up 11%, Hispanic/Latino (n = 43) 4%, Asian (n = 27) 2%, and the "other" category (n = 23) and no answer (n = 40) made up the remaining 6%. Ethnicity did however closely mirror the American population, according to US Census data that notes 73% of Americans are Caucasian, and 12% are African American (US Census, 2016).

Respondents were just slightly more educated than was reflected in US Census data (US Census, 2010), with the majority of respondents reporting they were high school graduates (n =

234) or had earned a bachelor's degree (n = 294) or attended graduate or professional school (n = 150). *Annual income* among survey respondents was similar to those reported by the US Census (2016), which averages individual income at $35,761. Survey respondents most commonly reported annual income amounts of up to $40K ($n$ = 424), and $40K to $60K ($n$ = 249).

Table 3.3. *Demographic Descriptive Statistics*

		N	*%*
Gender[a]	Male	648	58.50
	Female	456	41.20
Ethnicity[a]	White	852	77.00
	African American	123	11.10
	Hispanic/Latino	43	3.90
	Asian	27	2.40
Education	Less than HS	20	1.80
	HS Grad	234	21.10
	Some college	305	27.60
	Associate	103	9.30
	Bachelor	294	26.60
	Graduate	150	13.60
Income	up to $40K	424	38.30
	$40-60K	249	22.50
	$60-80K	145	13.10
	$80-100K	104	9.40
	$100-150K	122	11.00
	$150-200K	31	2.80
	$200K+	28	2.50
Political Ideology[a]	Liberal	286	25.80
	Moderate	475	42.90
	Conservative	344	31.10
Partisanship[a]	Democrat	415	37.50
	Independent	334	30.20
	Republican	358	32.30

[a] Dummy coded variable for subsequent analyses: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Political measurements were captured because of the polarized nature of the #TakeaKnee crisis (Quealy, 2017). *Political ideology* was captured as Liberal (26%; n = 286), Moderate

(43%; *n* = 475), and Conservative (31%; *n* = 344), reflecting an increased number of moderates from the national average. According to the most recently reported finalized American National Election Studies (ANES) data (2012), the percentages of American ideology nationwide are: liberal 24%, moderate 32%, and conservative 36% (with 8% no answer/don't know). *Political partisanship* was closely distributed among the three main parties: Democrat (38%; *n* = 415), Independent or Unaffiliated (30%; *n* = 334) and Republican (32%; *n* = 358) but ANES (2012) data showed a more polarized nation than this survey's respondents with Democrats at 46%, Independents 14%, and Republicans at 39%. This may be because of the addition of the word "unaffiliated" within this survey's independent category. This concludes the demographic reporting of the survey's respondents. Next, the survey measurements and scales creation are presented.

Survey Measures

The flow of the survey instrument integrated the discussion networks around portions of the traditional social science survey components (see Appendix A for the survey codebook). This particular flow was structured to reduce respondent burden while also minimizing response-order effect. For example, topically, the traditional survey components first measured sport identification, then fan behaviors, and then stakeholders' perceptions of NFL-related crises. The survey flow captured the sport identification levels of respondents without first subjecting respondents to the negatively valenced information inherent in crisis. Such protection from response-order effects was important in both traditional social science surveys and in discussion network data collection (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987). The survey concluded after the traditional and egocentric discussion network measurements were captured with questions concerning the

respondent's demographic information (which were reported above). This section begins by detailing how the major dependent variables were measured.

This survey included measurement of each respondent's level of crisis perceptions of a NFL crisis, sport identification, fan behaviors, and demographic information. The stakeholders' perceptions, sport identification, and fan behaviors variables are all measured along seven-point continuous scales. Marsden and Wright (2010) in their investigation of scale ratings found that reliability levels off after seven points. Seven points also offers a good amount of variability for analysis, they wrote. All measurements additionally adhere to Marsden and Wright's (2010) advice that scale ratings should be clearly labeled and appear as ordinal and progressing. Detailed explanations of each measurement follow, but first a review of the topical focus of this dissertation—crises in the NFL.

Crises in the NFL. This dissertation's measurements focused on past or ongoing crises experienced within the National Football League (NFL). The NFL is a trade organization made up of 32 professional American football teams. Commissioner Roger Goodell leads the multibillion-dollar organization. Crises have continued to plague the NFL on and off since the early 1990s. The periods of heightened crisis in the NFL include the seasons during 1994, 1996, 1997, 2014, 2015, (Benedict & Yaeger, 1998; Schrotenboer, 2015, 2014), 2016, and 2017. The NFL in 2017 experienced numerous simultaneous crises with national, polarized attention, and negative perceptions both within and outside of the league ("NFL in Crisis", 2017). Kanski (2016) explained:

> The teams or 'brands' are getting weighed down by controversy after controversy and the NFL needs to start getting ahead of these issues to prevent overall erosion of the reputation (para. 20).

During the 2017 season, the NFL released a job call to hire an on-staff, senior crisis communication position for the league (Rogers, 2017).

The NFL was chosen for the context of this study on sport crises because of the nature of its highly publicized, ongoing crises (Kanski, 2016; "NFL in Crisis," 2017; Rogers, 2017; Schrotenboer, 2015, 2014). To better explain, a diverse enough array of crises have occurred within the NFL to offer measurement of perceptions concerning several overarching topics. The four crises chosen for analysis in this research also fit within differing areas of the SCCT model (see Appendix B for an explanation of each of the four crises). The four crises situate within various considerations of stakeholders' perceptions measurements (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. *Four Crises Examined by SCCT's Crisis Perception Factors*

Crisis Attribution (crisis responsibility)	Crisis Description (crisis history)	Relational History (sport identification)	Amount of Evidence
Deflategate [involved player, team, and league]	Cheating (one-time accusation)	Yes – fanship/fandom/favorite team/reputation	ambiguous evidence
Concussions | CTE [involves player, team and league]	Health and Safety (ongoing)	Yes – fanship/fandom/favorite team/reputation	veracity of evidence
Ezekiel Elliot [involved player, team, and league]	Domestic assault (one-in-a-series of events)	Yes – fanship/fandom/favorite team/reputation	ambiguous evidence
Colin Kaepernick #TakeaKnee [involves player, teams, and league]	Societal | Political (ongoing)	Yes – fanship/fandom/favorite team/reputation	veracity of evidence

Note: See Appendix B for descriptions of each crisis.

Levels of measurement in the NFL. This dissertation assessed stakeholders' perceptions for levels of crisis attribution of these four crises within the NFL organization. The commonly researched structural levels of sport crises have historically been focused at the organizational- and individual-level (Blaney, Lippert, & Smith, 2013; Coombs, 2014; Wenner, 2013). This

dissertation's focus on the NFL adopts both the organizational- and individual-levels, and adds a third: team level, to capture the multi-layered complexities present in the NFL. These structural layers can be expanded beyond organizational (NFL) and individual (players, coaches), to include teams such as the New England Patriots in the Deflategate case, for example. This layered approach extends current knowledge on crisis attribution in sport, which aids in answering RQ1, and pairs with RQ2 for a deeper exploration into sport identification's role in stakeholders' perceptions because sport identification is notably strongest at the team level (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Stakeholders' perceptions. This dissertation examined stakeholders' perceptions of sport-related crises. First, survey respondents were asked about their familiarity with the four crises and then asked whether they had discussed any of the four crises with others. Respondents were asked to select all crises they had heard about and talked about, and then they were asked to select the one crisis they had discussed with others the most. This self-selection based on frequency of discussion was conducted to facilitate the egocentric discussion network portion of this research. For that reason, no quotas were placed on each of the four crisis selections because it was important to allow respondents to select a crisis they had actually discussed with others

Stakeholders' perceptions were divided into two main overarching categories: crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. This section reviews these two dependent variables' measurements. This section reviews the assessment factor components combined to create a crisis perceptions scale, followed by a review of the measures used for the reputational outcomes scale. Crisis perceptions included the level of the NFL where respondents placed attribution of responsibility, several measures within the crisis responsibility assessment factor, and crisis history. Presented second are the measurements for reputational outcomes. Past experimental

studies have measured both prior organizational reputation and reputational outcomes (Coombs, 2004, 2001, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2009, 2002, 1996; Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016), but it is important to specifically note that this dissertation measured only *resultant* reputational outcomes. To begin, the crisis perceptions measurements are reviewed and scale creation is discussed.

All continuous scale measurements were numbered 1-7 and increased in negative valence. For example, respondents were asked how much blame they placed on the league, team, or athlete and the response choice was 1 = do not blame at all to 7 = very much blame. Therefore, the higher the mean in the crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, the more negative the perception. Additionally, descriptive statistics are reported here with the measures because of the numerous variables assessed in this dissertation and Appendix C reports all scale creation, including factor analyses and internal reliability measurements.

Crisis perceptions. Crisis perceptions (Coombs, 2007a, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; 2006, 1996) were measured by examining the SCCT assessment factors of crisis responsibility and crisis history, alongside crisis attribution (Coombs, 2007b). The components included in the crisis responsibility assessment factor included the amount of blame, amount of evidence, and whether the cause of the crisis was internal or external, accidental or intentional. Each is explained in more detail to come (see section F in the survey codebook for a full listing of the crisis measurements).

Crisis attribution was measured by asking respondents at what level—the macro (league), meso (team) and micro (athlete) levels—they attributed crisis responsibility for the specific crisis into which they had self-selected. These levels were especially key in measuring attribution, as well as more precisely measuring the other components of crisis responsibility. Crisis attribution

and not the specific crises are the level of measurement for this research. The four specific crises are discussed in the results section, but the focus remains at the attribution levels of league, team, and athlete for the four crises, overall.

Respondents reported attributing crisis at the league level (n = 417), team level (n = 136), and the athlete level (n = 487). They were also asked to what degree or how much blame they placed at the level they attributed responsibility for the crisis into which they had self-selected. Respondents reported placing strong amounts of blame on the league (n = 417, M = 5.42, SD = 1.68), team (n = 136, M = 5.14, SD = 1.83), and athlete (n = 487, M = 5.82, SD = 1.79) levels. Each exhibited blame levels well above the median scale point, which means stakeholders placed a high amount of blame across all the three levels of the NFL for the four crises.

Other crisis responsibility components were measured, including asking respondents the amount of evidence present at the selected level (league: n = 417, M = 4.76, SD = 1.97; team: n = 136, M = 4.96, SD = 1.72; and athlete: n = 487, M = 5.96, SD = 1.57); and whether the crisis was internally or externally caused at that level (league: n = 417, M = 4.73, SD = 1.93; team: n = 134, M = 4.07, SD = 1.97; and athlete: n = 485, M = 4.65, SD = 2.20). Respondents were additionally asked whether the crisis was accidental or intentional (league: n = 416, M = 4.60, SD = 2.01; team: n = 135, M = 4.83, SD = 1.93; and athlete: n = 486, M = 5.99, SD = 1.69).

Crisis history was measured by asking respondents how often such crises occurred in the NFL (at each level) from just once to one-in-a-series of events (league: n = 416, M = 5.00, SD = 1.84; team: n = 133, M = 4.68, SD = 1.82; and athlete: n = 486, M = 5.29, SD = 1.79).

A series of factor analyses were conducted on all of these crisis perceptions measurements at each level (the league level, the team level, and the athlete level, respectively). Please see Appendix C for a full explanation. Each level's crisis perceptions measures were

therefore combined to create a crisis perceptions scale: overall crisis perceptions for league (n = 415, M = 4.94, SD = 1.36), overall crisis perceptions for team (n = 133, M = 4.92, SD = 1.47), and overall crisis perceptions for athlete (n = 486, M = 5.77, SD = 1.33). Again, the higher the mean, the more negative stakeholders' crisis perceptions. This means that at all three levels, perceptions were more negative than positive and stakeholders' crisis perceptions were the most negative at the athlete level.

Reputational outcomes. Reputation as an outcome of crisis perceptions is at the epicenter of the SCCT model. Reputational outcomes is the second stakeholders' perceptions variable in this research. The measurements and descriptive statistics for reputational outcomes are explained in this section. See Appendix C for detailed scale creation, including factor analyses and internal reliability tests.

Reputational outcomes perceptions have been measured by Coombs (1998) and by Coombs and Holladay (2002, 1996) in experimental designs with a pre- and post-crisis reputation perception scales. Trustworthiness has also been measured in relation to reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), as well as simply asking whether an organization was perceivably favorable or unfavorable (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). Eventually, SCCT studies widely applied an adaption of a 10-item organization image measurement originally constructed by McCroskey (1966), which included bi-polar traits like unintelligent to intelligent. This 10-item scale was reduced down to a five-item scale to best fit the measurement of crisis-related reputation perceptions. As a result, a five-item pre- and post-crisis "Organizational Reputation Perception" scale was created by Coombs, and Coombs and Holladay, and has been used in SCCT research widely (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The items included: (1) "The organization is concerned with the wellbeing of its publics," (2) "The organization is basically DISHONEST," (3) "I do

NOT trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident," (4) "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organization says," and (5) "The organization is NOT concerned with the wellbeing of its publics" (Coombs, 2004, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2009, 2002, 1996; Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016).

As aforementioned, this reputational scale is traditionally measured in experiments as a pre- and post-crisis measure, meaning the pre-crisis measurement is examined as a baseline perception before the manipulation is presented, usually in the form of some wrongdoing by the entity being examined (i.e. a crisis situation). Then, reputation is again measured as an outcome following the crisis. This dissertation measures reputation *only* as the post-crisis outcome measure. This was necessary because the crises being examined in this dissertation are actual events that have already occurred or are ongoing.

Reputational outcomes scale measurement results. The five-item scale was asked across the selected three levels of analysis (league, team, and athlete). The five-item scale was reduced down to three questions after recoding the two items that were positively valenced to match the other three negatively valenced items, and after conducting a factor analysis and examining the Cronbach's alphas for the five items together (a separate factor analysis and internal consistency test for each respective level: league, team, athlete). The two recoded items did not meet the various thresholds for acceptable factor loading (Carpenter, 2018) and were not internally consistent with the other three measures either (see Appendix C for details).

The first and third measures were therefore removed, and the remaining three items ("*The [league | team | individual] is basically DISHONEST," "I do NOT trust the [league | team | individual] to tell the truth about the incident*," and "*The [league | team | individual] is NOT concerned with the wellbeing of its publics*.") resulted in the following final three reputational

outcomes scales: the league reputational outcomes scale (n = 417, M = 4.48, SD = 1.73), the team reputational outcomes scale (n = 134, M = 4.50, SD = 1.76), and the athlete reputational outcomes scale (n = 485, M = 4.06, SD = 2.02). Note that the higher the mean, the less favorable the reputational outcomes perceptions, which indicates that team reputations were perceived the most negatively between the three levels, and athlete reputations the least.

The crisis perceptions and reputational outcome variables are seminal dependent variables throughout the remainder of this research so it was important to test their theoretical adherence (see Appendix C). The fact that at the team level nearly half of the variance was explained in the regression model yet no demographic variables showed any significance, not only strongly upholds the theoretical premise that crisis perceptions are antecedent of resultant perceptions of reputation, but also that there were more than personal socio-demographics driving those perceptions. The next section (sport identification) addresses the possible additional explanatory variables, but first crisis emotions measurements are reviewed.

Emotions in response to crisis. In addition to crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, the affective and behavioral outcomes of crisis were also measured. The affective outcomes are a combination of Coombs' past explication of emotions such as sympathy and anger in response to crisis perceptions, alongside the application of schadenfreude, which is also applied in fan behavior literature (Coombs 2007a, Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). Coombs explained that schadenfreude is a more extreme emotional response than anger and is positioned opposite from sympathy (Coombs, 2007a). Schadenfreude, therefore, was conceptualized in this dissertation as a combined measurement of emotional and behavioral extensions of crisis perceptions and fan behaviors. The next section provides an explanation of how schadenfreude was measured in relation to crisis perceptions.

Schadenfreude in response to sport crisis. Coombs incorporated schadenfreude in his extended conceptualization of the effects of crisis perceptions on emotions (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2005). Just as SCCT is rooted in Heider's (1958) attribution theory, Coombs also drew from the same book for the explanation of schadenfreude as a discordant reaction to another's misfortune. Coombs argued that sympathy is the more concordant reaction to crisis, especially crises that fall within the victim or accidental crisis clusters. Coombs (2007a) also explained that as crisis attribution increases, feelings of anger and even schadenfreude will intensify as feelings of sympathy decline. This is especially true in crises categorized within the intentional crisis cluster, as crises with a high attribution of responsibility correlate with negative stakeholders' perceptions concerning crisis responsibility, and result in feelings that are much more negative, including anger.

Past studies demonstrate that schadenfreude is a group construct opposite of sympathy and is likely driven by underlying envy (Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009). Dalakas and Phillips Melancon's (2012) scale development of sport-related schadenfreude asked four questions that included: "I will feel great joy if a company that sponsors a team I hate goes out of business." "I will feel great joy if the owner of a team I hate faces legal troubles." "I will feel great joy if a player of team gets suspended for a year, even if the suspension was not completely deserved." "I will feel great joy if the facility (stadium, arena) of a team I hate suffers damage."

This dissertation combines the conceptualization of the affective response to crisis along a continuum between sympathy, anger, and schadenfreude (Coombs, 2007a), with the measurement of schadenfreude from the fan behavior literature (Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). Schadenfreude was also measured as a fan behavior and those measurements are

discussed later. For now, schadenfreude as an emotional response to sport crisis was measured in this dissertation by asking a five-item adapted scale (Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). The questions asked respondents to select which emotion, if any, they felt pertaining to the selected sport crisis. Respondents were asked: "When I first heard about the crisis, I felt…" "When I heard about the suspension related to the incident, I felt…" "When I heard about the legal troubles related to the incident, I felt…" "When I heard about loss of sponsors because of the incident, I felt…" The respondent had four choices for each question: sympathy, anger, joy, or none of these.

A full list of results at each level for each emotion can be found in Table 3.5. Overall, respondents reported one of the three emotions over none at all. Responses varied greatly by question and by level. Kuder-Richardson 20 tests (KR-20) were conducted to test for internal reliability of each of the dummy-coded emotion variables (*i.e.,* 1 = emotion present, 0 = emotion not present). The three questions relating to crisis repercussions were reliable across each of the three emotions and at each NFL level (league sympathy KR-20 a =.74; league anger KR-20 a =.79; league joy KR-20 a =.77), (team sympathy KR-20 a =.84; team anger KR-20 a =.79; team joy KR-20 a =.86), and (athlete sympathy KR-20 a =.76; athlete anger KR-20 a =.77; athlete joy KR-20 a =.86).

Table 3.5. *Emotions in Response to Crisis Overall and Crisis Repercussions*

	League	N	%	Team	N	%	Athlete	N	%
Emotion Overall	No Emotion	59	5.3	No Emotion	23	2.1	No Emotion	86	7.8
	Sympathy	153	13.8	Sympathy	36	3.3	Sympathy	74	6.7
	Anger	167	15.1	Anger	61	5.5	Anger	306	27.6
	Joy	38	3.4	Joy	16	1.4	Joy	21	1.9
Suspension	No Emotion	104	9.4	No Emotion	25	2.3	No Emotion	152	13.7
	Sympathy	64	5.8	Sympathy	31	2.8	Sympathy	56	5.1
	Anger	148	13.4	Anger	24	2.2	Anger	72	6.5
	Joy	100	9	Joy	56	5.1	Joy	207	18.7
Legal	No Emotion	122	11	No Emotion	29	2.6	No Emotion	197	17.8
	Sympathy	85	7.7	Sympathy	33	3	Sympathy	67	6.1
	Anger	137	12.4	Anger	32	2.9	Anger	88	7.9
	Joy	72	6.5	Joy	42	3.8	Joy	135	12.2
Sponsor	No Emotion	109	9.8	No Emotion	27	2.4	No Emotion	147	13.3
	Sympathy	77	7	Sympathy	33	3	Sympathy	64	5.8
	Anger	109	9.8	Anger	31	2.8	Anger	66	6
	Joy	121	10.9	Joy	45	4.1	Joy	210	19

Each of the emotional responses—sympathy, anger, joy, and (none = 0)—to crisis repercussions—suspensions, legal woes, and loss of sponsors—were summed to create an index (range 0-3) at each level (league, team, and athlete) for use in subsequent analyses. In short, emotional responses varied across levels but sympathy was reported most frequently at the league level (M = .20), and so was anger (M = .36), but joy was most commonly reported as an emotional response at the athlete level (M = .50). Emotional response at the team level was reported least for all three emotions: sympathy (M = .09), anger (M = .08), and joy (M = .13).

This completes the stakeholders' perception measurements asked in the first half of this dissertation's survey instrument. Next, a review of the sport identification measurements are presented.

Sport identification. Sport identification levels were captured by asking a series of questions regarding the respondents' propensity to engage with, as well as respondents' propensity to socially or individually identify with, sport and, more specifically, the NFL (see

section B of the survey codebook located in Appendix A). First, the survey measured fandom (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010), then fanship (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and then several sport engagement and involvement items (Brown 2015; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Moyer-Guse, 2015, 2008; Swanson et al., 2003). This section discusses these measurements and the scale creation of fandom and fanship.

Fandom and fanship were measured to identify the social and individual connectedness to sport felt by each respondent (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Fandom and fanship are demonstrated through involvement and engagement behaviors and each is described as a continuum (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Gantz, Wang, Paul & Potter, 2006) that "represents an array of thought processes, affective attachments, and behaviors that separate fans from nonfans" (Gantz, et al., 2006, p. 96). Fandom within groups of likeminded fans, and the fanship levels held by individuals, can affect resultant perceptions (Brown, 2015; Moyer-Guse, 2015, 2008; Wann, 2006). This dissertation further operationalizes fandom and fanship as relational history (Coombs, 2001). For these reasons, this dissertation investigated sport identification as an influencer of more positively valenced crisis perceptions. The specific measurements for sport identification follow.

Fandom. Fandom has unfortunately been used synonymously and interchangeably with fanship over the years (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Fandom is defined as a social identification with other fans and a collective esteem (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Past measurements of fandom have focused on numerous considerations related to sport. For example, the "Sports Fan Motivation Scale," which has been reported in studies as fandom, featured the following measurement components: eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family (Wann, Schrader, &

Wilsen, 1999). The problem with the "Sports Fan Motivation Scale" was most of its items more closely related to individual sport connectedness and not the social aspects or group identity that fandom by definition represents (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Reysen and Branscombe (2010) created an identification scale by conducting a series of experiments with college students. This inductive study grew into 72 constructed components the authors eventually worked into a manageable 11-item scale. The 11-item sport fandom scale used in this dissertation was adapted from Reysen and Branscombe's (2010) 11-item general interest identification scale.

An adapted eight items were measured along the same seven-point agreement scale as all other scales in this research (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Ranging from 1 = "do not agree at all" to 7 = "strongly agree," respondents were asked: "I have changed my work schedule to accommodate my interest in sport;" "I would spend all my money on sport if I could;" "I want everyone to know I am connected to sport;" "When sport are popular, I feel great;" "I feel a purposeful connection to sport;" "I strongly identify with sport;" "I would devote all my time to sport if I could;" "I want to be friends with others who also enjoy sport."

The two types of identification were compared and contrasted to ensure reliability, validity, and most importantly, face validity, for the social and individual dichotomy of identification. Please refer to Appendix C for details about this testing. For now, the fandom scale (n = 1,100, M = 3.28, SD = 1.78) revealed a relatively weak level of social identification among NFL stakeholders. Next, the fanship measures are presented.

Fanship. Today's most widely applied fanship measurement was progressively developed from an identification scale and then expanded into a series of other studies that specifically measured differing types of identification, including sport. The first study was an

organizational identity survey conducted by Mael and Ashforth (1992). This original identity measurement surveyed collegiate alumnae and asked them to rate their levels of identification with the institution. Numerous studies have adapted that original scale and applied it to the measurement of sport identification. For example, Mael and Ashforth's (1992) scale was paired to measure affiliation and game attendance (Swanson, Gwinner, Larson, & Janda, 2003); then, the identity scale was used to exhibit a higher propensity to attend sporting events (Kim & Trail, 2010; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) was created as an adaption of Mael and Ashforth's (1992) scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The SSIS has become the most reliable fan-measurement scale and the scale most widely applied to sport identification (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011). The scale was made up of seven items that originally measured sport identification with a collegiate basketball team.

Fanship was conceptualized in this dissertation as the *individual* identification felt between a person and his/her favorite team and defined as: how much an individual enjoys, holds interest in, and identifies with sport (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Fanship was therefore measured in this dissertation by adapting the SSIS scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and capturing NFL team identification, specifically. To explain, respondents were first asked to select his/her *favorite NFL team* from a dropdown list of all 32 teams (Spinda, 2011). Then, the seven-item adapted SSIS scale asked the following questions with the favorite NFL team <inserted> into each question: "How important is it to you that <insert favorite NFL team> wins ("not at all important" to "very important")?" "How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of <insert favorite NFL team> (not at all to very much)?" "How closely do you follow (via news, social media, etc.,) <insert favorite NFL team> ("never" to "very often")?" "How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of <insert favorite NFL team> ("not at all" to "very much")?"

"How important is being a fan of <insert favorite NFL team> ("not at all" to "very much")?" "How much do you dislike <insert favorite NFL team>'s rivals ("do not dislike at all" to "very much dislike")?" and "How often do you display <insert favorite NFL team>'s name/logo where you live/work or on your clothing ("never" to "always")?"

The fanship scale (n = 990, M = 4.80, SD = 1.61) revealed a moderate level of team identification among NFL stakeholders. If a respondent answered "no favorite NFL team," (n = 116) the respondent was subsequently offered general sport fanship and fan behavior questions instead of the team-specific questions all other respondents who selected a favorite team received. Not surprisingly, those who answered they favored no NFL team (M = 2.59, SD = 1.79) reported lower identification levels.

Separately, a one-question sports fan measure was asked: "How much would you say you are a fan of sport?" (End et al., 2003). This question was asked to gauge its validity and reliability in comparison to the fandom scale and the fanship scale because it was also asked among the interpreter data in the discussion network sections, however, the results show this measure averaged higher (n = 116, M = 4.93, SD = 1.92) than the other two scales.

Other sport engagement measures. In addition to sport fandom and NFL team fanship, engagement and involvement with sport were also measured. Engagement was measured as *time spent* in hours [weekly] consuming any sport (M = 8.56), and the amount of time spent in hours [weekly] consuming the NFL (M = 4.96) (Brown 2015; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Moyer-Guse, 2015, 2008; Spinda, 2011; Swanson et al., 2003). *Involvement* includes whether the respondent participates in fantasy sport and fantasy football, and if so, how often (M = 5.15).

This concludes the sport identification and engagement measurements for this section of the survey. Next, the fan behavior measurements are described.

Fan behaviors. Respondents were asked a series of questions to measure whether they partake in certain fan behaviors. The fan behaviors measured in this first half of the survey included CORFing (as a refresher, CORFing means cutting off reflective failure), blasting (which is talking trash to other sport fans), and schadenfreude (joy at another's adversity). BIRGing (basking in reflective glory) was not measured here because a similar question already exists in the fanship scale ("How often do you display <insert favorite NFL team>'s name/logo where you live/work or on your clothing?"). See section C of the survey codebook for a full listing of all fan behavior measurements for this first half of the survey.

CORFing measurement. CORFing (Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990) is a regressive information seeking measurement typically carried out when a fan's favorite team performs poorly. In other words, a fan might avoid seeking out news or watching replays of the loss or might avoid fans of the other winning team. CORFing presented unique considerations for this study because of its application later in the discussion networks. To explain, CORFing was diversely measured in this research by asking four questions concerning the respondents' propensity to avoid or to seek out news and highlights of game outcomes following both wins and losses of their favorite team.

Therefore, CORFing was measured by asking how likely the respondent was to seek out or to avoid sport news and game highlights following a win or following a loss by the respondent's favorite team, and then comparing the differences between those answers. CORFing in this dissertation was measured by asking: "If your team wins a game, how likely are you to seek out sport news and game highlights?" "If your team loses a game how likely are you to seek out sport news and game highlights?" "If your team wins a game, how likely are you to

avoid sport news and game highlights?" and "If your team loses a game, how likely are you to avoid sport news and game highlights?"

Cronbach's alphas were conducted on both pairs of measures: the two seek out measures (r = .63) and the two avoidance measures (r = .59). The two avoidance measures were combined to create a CORFing avoidance scale (n = 989, M = 3.07, SD = 1.80) and only this composite was used in this traditional social science section of the results.

Recall that some fan behaviors are also reflective of both in-group bias and out-group derogation. Fan-to-rival communication best displays both in-group bias and out-group derogation. The fan-to-rival fan behaviors measured in this dissertation are blasting and schadenfreude. Following is a review of the measurement of fan-to-rival fan behaviors of the survey's respondents in response to game outcomes.

Blasting measurement. Blasting (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011) is an image management strategy that exercises an in-group bias and an out-group derogation. Spinda (2011) later operationalized blasting as talking trash, operationalized as a direct communicative action: "Are you more/less likely to 'trash talk' to fans of other teams (more/less successful than your favorite team)?"

Blasting was operationalized in this dissertation as a direct derogative communicated act (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011). Blasting was measured along the same 1-7 scale in the survey by asking two questions about the respondent's likelihood of blasting following wins or losses of his/her favorite NFL team: "If your <insert favorite NFL team> wins a game, how likely are you to 'trash talk' to a fan of the losing team?" "If your <insert favorite NFL team> loses a game, how likely are you to 'trash talk' to a fan of the winning team?" Respondents' propensity to "trash talk" to others following wins by their favorite team (M = 3.23, SD = 2.18)

was higher than respondents' propensity to "trash talk" to others following losses by their favorite team (M = 2.84, SD = 2.01).

Schadenfreude measurement. Schadenfreude (Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach & Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958) is the feeling of joy at another's adversity. Cikara and Fiske (2012) note that schadenfreude is triggered in three ways: when a misfortune befalls an envied person; when the misfortune is perceived as deserved; and when there is something to be gained for the observer from that misfortune. Moreover, the authors noted that envy is an underlying predictor of schadenfreude. Leach et al. (2015, 2003) and Leach and Fiske (2009) explored the affective and behavioral variables related to schadenfreude, including joy or happiness, and gloating or feeling prideful. Schadenfreude also has been measured in many ways pertaining to sport rivalries. Cikara et al. (2011) even went so far as to rate the likelihood that sport fans would heckle, personally insult, throw food and beverages at, threaten, shove, or even hit a rival fan (scaled from 0 = "not at all likely", to 6 = "extremely likely").

Schadenfreude was operationalized in this dissertation as a combination of these past measurements. This dissertation defines schadenfreude as an in-group bias and out-group derogation that is envious toward a rival sport team's success and takes malicious joy in any negative outcome experienced by that rival team. A negative outcome experienced by a rival team was defined in this first half of the survey as a loss to the respondent's favorite NFL team. As such, the following measurements for schadenfreude are asked: "When a rival team loses to <insert favorite NFL team>, how likely are you to *feel happy*?" "When a rival team loses to <insert favorite NFL team>, how likely are you to *feel pride*?" "When a rival team loses to <insert favorite NFL team>, how likely are you to let others know your *feelings of joy* over that team's misfortune?" "When a rival team loses to <insert favorite NFL team>, how likely would

it be that you would *communicate feelings of pride* to others about that team's misfortune?" and "When a rival team loses to <insert favorite NFL team>, how likely would it be that you would *personally insult* others about their team's misfortune?"

A factor analysis was conducted of these five items (KMO .78, $p < .001$, $df = 10$) and all five items loaded on one factor (principal component analysis loadings resulted in each item ranging from .66 to .91) that accounted for 69% of variance. A Cronbach's alpha then resulted in acceptable internal consistency for the five measures ($a = .88$). Resultantly, a sport schadenfreude scale was created ($n = 990$, $M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.65$), which reflected that respondents felt joy at other fans' adversity of losing games or in response to crisis.

This concludes the fan behaviors measurements. Next, the items captured within each of the three discussion networks are explained.

Egocentric discussion networks. Egocentric networks involve the capture and analysis of a focal entity's social network (either online, offline, or both). This dissertation captured the social networks of 1,106 egos. Each ego's discussion networks were constructed by asking specific data collection measurements that were driven by network theory. Each ego was offered the opportunity to report three discussion networks: important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters.

Functional specificity hypothesis posits that individuals reach to certain others to meet specific needs. To create social formations, or specific social networks, functional specificity must guide the measurement. This is true for any sort of social formation, be it an organizational study of which organizations trade with certain suppliers (Burt, 2004), or when capturing who speaks to whom (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). One way in which functionally specific egocentric

discussion networks are captured is through a functionally specific name generator, which is discussed next.

Name generators. A name generator is a question or series of questions used to collect a list of an ego's alters. The ego is the survey respondent. Name generators are a critical component in structuring the discussion network data because they mark the "operational boundaries on the interpersonal environment," meaning they guide the ego's response within contexts and relations (Marsden, 1987, p. 123). Name generators focus on specific topics, certain feelings, support, and advice or other communication topics, yet most are general in design and nature (Perkins et al., 2015). Name generators should feature a defined or specific location (a village, for example), a certain time period, or a particular group membership (Perkins et al., 2015). Feld (1981) suggested people categorize their responses within a particular focus, and specificity is most essential when developing name generator questions (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010), and Borgatti et al (2013) named five types of relations that can be captured and assessed by name generators: role-based relations, interactions, affective ties, exchanges and flows, and cognitive ties.

Generally, egos list alters in social clusters (Feld, 1981), in order of closeness and contact frequency (Marsden, 1987), and egos list first those with whom they have the strongest ties (Burt, 1986). Such listing behaviors can be thought of along modern communication norms: immediate family members with which a person lives are spoken to most frequently face-to-face, friends text, and acquaintances communicate through social media. Gender also aligns with list order (Straits, 2000) and name generators can account for hierarchical listings that are actively and directly related to memory-induced topical bias (McCarty, Killworth, & Rennell, 2007). Moreover, as Perry and Pescosolido (2010) pointed out in health matters discussion networks,

topical conversations are happening outside of important matters networks but respondents are not recalling those discussants unless specifically prompted. Classifications of relationships can be improved for name generators, too. For example, Bush, Walker, and Perry, (2017) examined the nuances of role and relationship descriptors used in name generators and concluded that past discussion network studies have not aptly considered the "multiplex relationships" people have in today's broadened world of blended families and widened online networks (p. 103).

The number of alters that egos typically list vary widely. Researchers request between five and ten names, much like scale points in other measurements, but average discussants rests at three (Bush et al., 2017; Campbell & Lee, 1991; Fischer, 1982; Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010; Wellman, 1979). The more precisely targeted the name generator, the smaller the subsequent network becomes, too (Campbell & Lee, 1991). Still, name generators most commonly result in homogeneous egocentric discussion networks. This has been proven true even in a study testing "significant people" versus "important matters" name generators (Straits, 2000), in health matters discussion networks (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010), in political matters discussion networks (Klofstad, McClurg, & Rolfe, 2009), and even after capturing a "total network" (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, p. 119).

Name generators also present unique challenges to face validity. For example, Burt, in his 1996 name generator review of the General Social Survey (GSS), noted that coworkers were listed as daily conversationalists. Physical proximity indicates this would be true, but with today's online communication abilities, proximity is broader and wider than ever before (Bush et al., 2017). Also, just because coworker proximity lends itself to daily conversations, does not mean those conversations are necessarily personal, important, or intimate. These considerations

highlight the need for careful collection of relational data, and the careful conceptualization and operationalization of functionally specific egocentric discussion network data.

An effective name generator drills-down to specific matters and then helps identify both the core and the peripheral alters for each specified discussion network (Campbell & Lee, 1991; McCarty et al, 2007; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). Respondent burden is already high in egocentric discussion network surveys, though, so name generators must be worded in such a way that respondent burden is reduced (Cowan & Baldassarri, 2017; McCarty et al., 2007). This dissertation adopted this comprehensive approach, driven by functional specificity hypothesis and informed by past attempts at name generator data collection. This dissertation therefore offered a hybrid form of name generators (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010) that were specific and focused with prompts for capturing the functionally specific discussant of three discussion networks: important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters discussion networks. The name generator prompts included both offline and online discussants, agreeable and disagreeable discussants, and fans and rivals. This approach aided in extending network boundaries and collecting multiplex relationships (Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010).

To recap to this point, the egocentric discussion network portion of the survey instrument captured each of the 1,106 egos' social formations concerning a functionally specific matter. The survey captured data for three discussion networks using a diverse mix of research-informed name generators. In the sections to come, the specific measurements including the name generators, are discussed for each egocentric discussion network.

Measurement of the three discussion networks. Three discussion networks—important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters—were measured. The name generators for each network collected relational, attribute, and tie demographic data by applying similar variables

from the first half of the survey instrument to measure the same variables for the egos' offline and online social network members (e.g. alters). All egocentric network information was collected via name generators, interpreters, and interrelators. Egos answered all questions relating to their listed alters, therefore making all alter information perceptions held by the ego regarding his/her alters.

Following are the measures for each of the discussion networks. The important matters discussion network focused on gathering information on those alters with whom egos have the strongest ties and relational connections (Marsden, 1987). Following the important matters discussion network, the sport discussion network's measures are presented. The sport discussion network captured with whom people talked about sport and the NFL specifically, and integrated the measurement of fan behavior activation into those communication assessments. Then, the sport crisis discussion network measures are presented. The sport crisis discussion network explored the same crisis the ego chose earlier in the survey and asked whether and with whom the ego discussed the crisis. Notably, fan behaviors were measured in this final discussion network as activated communication ties between egos and alters. Each network also measured other attribute, relational, and tie demographics, and those measurements are presented below as well.

The important matters network was necessary to include in this research to acquire a baseline measurement of a more traditionally measured egocentric discussion network to compare against the two sport-related networks. Although respondent burden was high due to the length of time necessary to complete the survey instrument to measure three discussion networks, the important matters network was imperative to offer a comparative view for this first time exploration of sport matters and sport crisis matters discussion networks.

The two sport-focused discussion networks also notably featured extended name generators and sport-specific relationship measurements. All name generators were driven by the functional specificity hypothesis (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). The prompts are an extension of those used in past discussion network studies to collect additional peripheral ties (Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 2005). Each name generator offered up to five spaces for name to be listed. In all, across all three discussion networks, each ego could have listed up to 65 alters.

The sport-related networks also collected data on the presence and activation of the fan behaviors of CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude, which were operationalized and measured in the sport matters and the sport crisis matters discussion networks, uniquely. Additionally, to measure homophily, each discussion network captured the same attribute demographic information for alters as was captured for the ego (age, gender, ethnicity, political ideology, and political partisanship). The next section explains the measurements and variables for each discussion network in detail.

Important matters discussion network. The goal of the important matters discussion network (see section A of the survey codebook) was to gather the ego's closest network members (Marsden, 1987). The name generator in the important matters network first asked (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; PhenX Toolkit, 2017; Saffer, 2016): "Who are the people in your life with whom you discuss important matters? Who are the people you can really count on?" and offers five spaces for names to be listed. The next question asked: "Is there anyone who always wants to talk to you about important matters in life?" The third question asks: "Are there people who are, in general, a burden to you, because they want to discuss matters important to them, even if you do not?" Past studies cite that egos list anywhere from four to seven alters (Marsden, 1986). Three name generators offered five name slots each, thus offering up to 15

possible names to be listed. Names were suggested to be listed as nicknames, first names or first names and first initial of last name if differentiation of similar names was needed. This recommendation was present in an effort to keep alter identities confidential and unidentifiable.

Other attribute, relational, and tie demographic measurements, including relationship role (family, close friends, etc.) were captured. Relationship role identification was expanded in this dissertation from those used in past studies (Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1986; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010). *Relationship role* included kin: spouse/partner; parent (mother/father); other family member (sibling, aunt/uncle, cousins, in-laws, etc.), your child, step-parent (step-mother, step-father); and other stepfamily members (step-brother, step-sister, etc.). Close friends included "family" (very close family friend), and friends. Proximal discussants included coworkers, bosses, and neighbors. An online friend (friend on social media, for example), and acquaintances (group member, shop clerk, waitress/waiter, bus or subway passenger - someone the ego would speak to if they see them), and other (for any category not listed). Respondents were asked to select all that apply and those alters who were reported as two or more of the above selections were categorized as multiplex relationships.

Other attribute, relational, and tie demographics were captured throughout the important matters network, including frequency of communication, relationship closeness, amount of time known, alter demographics (excluding income and education), and a name interrelator matrix that asked who knows whom among all listed discussants. All of these same attribute, relational, and tie demographic measures were captured in the other two sport-related discussion networks, too. The measures unique to the sport discussion network are presented next.

Sport matters discussion network. The name generator for the sport matters discussion network (see section D of the survey codebook) encompasses advice offered by Borgatti et al

(2013, p. 264) to use "grand tour" questions that are broad in scope and ask a series of questions. The sport discussion network name generator included five questions that allowed up to five listed names each for a total of 25 possible alters. The name generator questions included: "Who do you talk to about sport?" and "Who talks to you about sport?" Then, fans and rivals were specifically captured: "What about people who are FANS of <your favorite sport team>. Can you list anyone you have spoken to about sport who is a FAN of <your favorite sport team>?" and "What about people who are fans of RIVAL teams to <your favorite sport team>? Can you list anyone you have spoken to in the past month about sport who is a fan of the RIVAL team to <your favorite sport team>?" Then the final name generator sought online discussants by asking: "Finally, what about ONLINE friends or acquaintances such as those in fantasy football leagues or on social media? Can you please list any online friends or acquaintances to whom you have spoken about sport?"

Identification in the sport discussion network included each alter's favorite team (Spinda, 2011), and asked ego to rate how much of a fan they perceive each alter to be: "How much would you say this person is a fan of sport?" (End et al., 2003). Egos in the sport discussion network rated themselves slightly higher than their alters (M = 5.70, SD = 1.58).

Fan behaviors were measured in the sport matters discussion network, but differed slightly from those asked earlier in the survey. CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude were measured by operationalizing each specifically as communicated fan behaviors. For example, *CORFing* (Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990) was measured by asking, "How likely is each person to SEEK YOU OUT and discuss game news and highlights following a WIN by your favorite sport team?" and "How likely is each person to seek you out and discuss game news and highlights following a LOSS by your favorite sport team?"

Blasting (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011) might be considered a network burden exchange. Blasting was measured by asking the ego's likelihood to "trash talk" to the alter: "How likely are you to 'trash talk' to each person listed following a WIN by your favorite sport team?" Reciprocity was measured here by also asking how likely the alter was to "trash talk" to the ego: "How likely is each person listed to "TRASH TALK" *to you* following a LOSS by your favorite sport team?"

Schadenfreude (Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach & Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958) was measured in the sport matters discussion network along a seven-point likelihood scale that asks whether the ego would communicate feelings of joy, communicate feelings of pride, or personally insult each listed alter should that alter's favorite team lose a game.

A *sport interrelator* was measured in both the sport matters and sport crisis matters discussion networks. The interrelator measured sport co-consumption between an ego and each alter. The following questions were asked on a seven-point continuous scale (never to very often): "How often do you and this alter…watch NFL games together; attend NFL games together; play fantasy football in same league together; cheer for the same team together, and talk about the NFL together." See Appendix D for more details on scale creation for this measure.

The same attribute, relational, and tie demographic data captured in the important matters network was also captured in the sport matters network, and these items included relationship role, frequency of communication, relationship closeness, time known, alter demographics, and the name interrelator asking who knows whom among sport discussants.

Sport crisis matters discussion network. The purpose of the sport crisis discussion network was to assess the selection, activation, and influence of an ego's network on crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, and to test the premise that crisis emotions are transformed into negative communication behaviors. Coombs once wrote:

> Ultimately, the model (SCCT) needs to connect the effects of a crisis to behavior intention. If crises altered reputations and create affect but did not impact behavioral intentions, there would be no reason to worry about the effects of crises," (Coombs, 2007a, p. 169).

This dissertation therefore explored whether stakeholders' negative affect in response to sport crises results in negative word-of-mouth. The sport crisis matters discussion network (see section G of the survey codebook) therefore focuses on the one NFL-related crisis the ego self-selected into earlier in the survey. The sport crisis discussion network section of the survey begins by briefing the ego: "Continuing on with the topic of the incidents that have occurred in the NFL, let's finally talk about to whom you might have discussed these incidents," before asking the first name generator question.

Similar name generator questions were asked in the sport crisis discussion network as were asked in the sport discussion network but are reworded to reflect crisis-specific discussions. The word "crisis" was not used in this section; instead, it was replaced with the word "incident." Briefly, it should be noted that as each name generator and discussion network narrows, so too will the number of respondents and the number of alters listed. In other words, some egos may have only spoken to one or two people about the specific crisis they were asked about in this section.

The five name generators in the sport crisis matters discussion network asked: “Recall earlier in the survey when you answered that you have talked the most about the <insert crisis> incident. The <insert crisis> incident will remain the focus of this last section of this survey. Think of the people to whom you have talked about the <insert crisis> incident specifically. These people may be the same or different from those you have listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of people who you talked with about the <insert crisis> incident.” Then, “Who talks to you about the <insert crisis> incident, specifically, whether you want them to or not?” Then, fans and rivals are captured but this differs from those asked in the sport discussion network: “What about people who are FANS of a team or athlete implicated in the <insert crisis> incident. Can you list anyone you have spoken to about the <insert crisis> incident who is a FAN of the team(s) or athlete(s) connected to the <insert crisis> incident?” and “What about people who are fans of RIVAL teams to the team(s) or athlete(s) connected to the <insert crisis>incident? Can you list anyone you have spoken to about the <insert crisis> incident who is a fan of a RIVAL team or athlete?”

After the name generators were presented, the filtering process reduce names listed to only one occurrence and then reduces again if the same person was listed in a prior discussion network. Then, the attribute, relational, and tie measurements were collected for each alter. The measures were:

Identification. For the sport crisis discussion network, identification questions again included each alter’s favorite team (Spinda, 2011), and the ego was asked to rate each alter’s level of being a fan of sport, “How much would you say this person is a fan of sport?” (End et al., 2003). Egos in the sport crisis discussion network rated themselves lower than their alters (M = 5.56, SD = 1.69). See Figure 4.1 for a depiction of fan levels by relationship roles.

Fan behaviors. Three fan behaviors were again measured, including CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude. The fan behaviors were worded as responses to the crisis and all items were measured along a seven-point continuous scale from 1 = not at all likely to 7 = very likely. For example, *CORFing* in response to crisis (Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990) was measured by asking, "How likely is each person to SEEK YOU OUT to discuss news or updates concerning the <insert crisis> incident?," and "How likely is each person to AVOID discussing news or updates concerning the <insert crisis> incident?"

Blasting in response to crisis (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011) was measured by asking how likely the ego was to "trash talk" each listed alter concerning the <inset crisis> incident, and how likely each listed alter was to "trash talk" to the ego about <inset crisis> incident.

Schadenfreude in communicating about sport crises (Cikara et al., 2011; Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958) was measured like schadenfreude in the sport discussion network. For example, this set of measurements captured the discordant communicated behaviors (Cikara et al., 2011; Heider, 1958): "How likely are you to communicate feelings of joy concerning the <inset crisis> incident to each person listed?" "How likely are you to communicate feelings of pride to each person listed concerning the <inset crisis> incident?" and "How likely are you to personally insult each person listed concerning the <inset crisis> incident?"

Finally, the other attribute, relational, and tie demographics were captured for the alters, These items included demographics, relationship role, frequency of communication, relationship closeness, time known, the sport interrelator, and the name interrelator asking who knows whom within the egocentric discussion network.

In sum, the survey instrument captured the egocentric discussion network data by carefully crafting functionally specific name generators to capture networks for three specific matters: important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters. The sport matters discussion network captured the individuals with whom the ego speaks about sport in general, and the sport crisis matters discussion network captured those with whom the ego specifically discussed one of four NFL-related crises. The discussion network measures also captured interpreter and interrelator data, as well as attribute, relational, and tie demographics, for a whole-view investigation into network selection, activation, and influence concerning stakeholders' perceptions.

This concludes the presentation of the overall survey instrument—the traditional social science survey questions posited in the survey, and the egocentric network data collection for the three discussion networks collected by the same instrument. The next section of this chapter explains the data preparation techniques necessary for a full assessment of these measures.

Data Preparation for Analyses

Data were sorted into several formats for subsequent analyses. This process was necessitated by the data collected and to respond to the various research questions and hypotheses. The data were sorted into (a) a traditional social science data file, (b) three egocentric networks, and (c) a nested, long-form data set of all three networks' egos and alters.

The traditional social science portion of the collected survey data included all respondent demographics and the seminal dependent variables including stakeholders' perceptions, sport identification, and fan behaviors. This data set addresses RQ1-3 and H1-3.

The three discussion networks were created for three separate egocentric network analyses: (1) the important matters network, (2) the sport discussion network, and (3) the sport

crisis discussion network. Each of the three networks included the attribute, relational, and tie demographics that were collected for each discussion network. These data files answered $RQ4_{a-c}$.

Thirdly, a nested data set was created that included all three networks' egos and alters, and the independent and dependent variables collected in each discussion network. This dataset is "long-form" and "nested," which means the data were situated across rows where each row represented one ego and one alter and the columns represent the all attribute, relational, and tie variables captured (see Perry et al, 2018 or Halgin & Borgatti, 2012 for instructions on this formatting). For example, each row of data represented an ego-alter relationship specific to that dyadic set. For each additional alter, another row is presented. If an ego reported three alters, each respective ego-alter pair is one row of data, and the rows are repeated for each additional alter: the first row reported the ego and the first alter's data, the second row reported the ego and the second alter, and the third row reported the ego and the third alter, and so on. Therefore, the ego's data were listed three times across those three rows but each alter's data were uniquely present in each row. This long-form nested dataset was used for the multilevel modeling necessary to analyze the multilevel egocentric network data. This final data set was analyzed to explore $RQ5_{a-c}$ and H4-6.

The measures in the long-form nested data vary slightly from the traditional social science measures. This difference is a result of the repeated listing of egos' measures by the necessitated formatting of the long-form nested data. This slight variation is because of an overrepresentation of some respondents who reported a larger number of alters and a slight underrepresentation of other egos who reported fewer alters. The range of the number of reported alters in the three discussion networks was 1-54. This was one important reason behind presenting the results in two separate sections. To better explain, the mean (M = 4.80) and

standard deviation (*SD* = 1.61) for *fanship* in the traditional social science results vary slightly from the mean (*M* = 4.86) and standard deviation (*SD* = 1.56) for *fanship* in the nested data network results. All prior factor analyses and internal consistency tests and procedures were again conducted on the long-form nested dataset to ensure no significant differences or inconsistencies emerged. All measures remained intact and all measures were similarly scaled.

Chapter Synopsis

This concludes description of the methods used to explore the research questions and hypotheses presented in this dissertation. This chapter overviewed the survey instrument, launch, and sample; the major dependent and independent variables measured; and the initial data preparation for analysis. To review before moving forward in reporting the findings of this investigation, an online national survey assessed stakeholders' perceptions of sport-related crises in the NFL, while taking into consideration sport identification, and fan behavior propensity and activation among American sport fans. Additionally, the survey instrument captured each ego's functionally specific discussion networks – an important matters network, a sport discussion network, and a sport crisis discussion network. This combination helped connect the psychological measurements with the behavioral outcomes of crisis perceptions, sport identification, and fan behaviors in the context of sport-related crisis communication. Furthermore, the application of network measurements and multilevel statistical analyses allowed for a deeper investigation than has ever been explored in crisis communication, thus expanding the boundaries of crisis communication theory, methods, and practice. The next chapter presents the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The prior chapters presented the theoretical warrant, methods employed, and measurements used to explore stakeholders' perceptions, identification (operationalized as sport fanship and sport fandom), fans behaviors, and how and to whom fans and nonfans talk about important matters, sport matters, and sport crisis matters. More specifically, combining traditional social science approaches with egocentric discussion network analysis, this dissertation examined stakeholders' perceptions of crises, and whether or how identification with the entity or actor involved in the crisis might result in differing perceptions. The resultant affective and behavioral outcomes of crisis perceptions also are examined for activation throughout the egocentric networks.

To organize the findings, this chapter has two primary sections: a traditional social science section and a second egocentric discussion network section. The first section addresses RQ1-3 and H1-3. Here, analyses assess the extent of crisis perceptions, and examine whether associations exist among crisis perceptions and sport identification and fan behaviors. The survey measurements were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 24 software. The second section of this chapter delivers the egocentric discussion network analyses to answer RQ4-5 and $H4_a$-H6. Here, some components of the social network data were analyzed using E-NET, an ego network analysis program (Borgatti et al., 2006), and

SPSS, Version 24 software. This chapter concludes with a brief synopsis of findings from both sections.

Traditional Social Science Findings

This dissertation set out to examine stakeholders' perceptions related to sport crises, how identification might calibrate those perceptions, and whether sport fans activate fan behaviors in similar ways in response to sport-related crises as they do to game outcomes. This section presents the findings of those efforts by first providing an overview of respondents' crisis perceptions to answer RQ1. Second, the associations and predictability of sport identification among NFL stakeholders was examined to answer $RQ2_{a-c}$ and test hypotheses $H1_{a-b}$-$H2_{a-b}$. This section concludes with the exploration of three fan behaviors—CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude—to answer $RQ3_{a-c}$ and H3. The fan behavior analyses present the degree to which the three behaviors relate to identification, are activated in response to game wins and losses, and whether the three fan behaviors associate with crisis perceptions. This section of findings concludes with a synopsis of results before presenting the second section's findings regarding the egocentric discussion network analyses. The traditional social science findings begins with an overview of NFL crises and respondents' perceptions of those crises.

Stakeholders' Perceptions in Response to NFL Crises

This dissertation's core focus rests upon stakeholders' crisis perceptions. This section addresses RQ1, which asked the extent of crisis perceptions and the reputational outcomes related to those perceptions. Presented here is a review of stakeholders' crisis perceptions and the perceived post-crisis reputational outcomes reported in response to four NFL-related crises. The four crises were representative of an array of crisis types, differing amounts of evidence and number of occurrences, and variable in being accidental or purposeful. Respondents were asked

where among the three levels of the NFL (league, team, athlete) they attributed the crisis into which they had self-selected. The precise measures and scale creation for the crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes were reported in the prior methods chapter and were explained in more detail in Appendix C, so only a brief recap is provided at the beginning of each section in this chapter. The two sections that follow, reported results for crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, each begin with a review of the four crises and the three levels of crisis attribution, and then comparative analyses are reported to answer RQ1.

Stakeholders' crisis perceptions. The measurement of stakeholders' perceptions in relation to sport crises is a unique undertaking currently understudied in crisis literature. Therefore, this dissertation fills this gap by investigating stakeholders' perceptions surrounding four recent or ongoing NFL crises: *CTE*, football's concussion crisis; *Deflategate*, a cheating accusation involving NFL's top quarterback Tom Brady and his team the New England Patriots; *Ezekiel Elliot*, the latest NFL athlete accused of domestic assault; and the *#TakeaKnee* movement, which was originally initiated by Colin Kaepernick during the 2016 season in protest of officer-involved shootings of African American males and publically denounced during the 2017 season by the President of the United States.

Survey respondents were asked about their familiarity with the four crises and then asked whether they had discussed any of the four crises with others. Self-selection of one crisis was based on frequency of discussion (to facilitate the egocentric discussion network portion of this research). Most, but not all, survey respondents reported knowing about and discussing one of the crises (n = 1,040). See Table 4.1 for a full breakdown of results by the crisis selected, the crisis attribution levels, and the amount of blame that was placed at each level of crisis attribution for each of the four crises.

Table 4.1. *Crises, Crisis Attribution, and Amount of Blame*

				Amount of Blame	
		N	*%*	*M*	*SD*
League Attribution	CTE	138	33.1	5.42	1.49
	Deflategate	43	10.3	5.42	1.65
	EE/DV	12	2.9	6.33	0.99
	#TakeaKnee	189	45.3	5.44	1.85
Team Attribution	CTE	42	30.9	4.83	1.55
	Deflategate	51	37.5	5.78	1.47
	EE/DV	3	2.2	5.33	2.08
	#TakeaKnee	27	19.9	4.78	2.24
Athlete Attribution	CTE	34	7	4.62	1.71
	Deflategate	39	8	6	1.05
	EE/DV	32	6.6	5.56	1.05
	#TakeaKnee	353	72.5	6.02	1.85

Overall, the majority of respondents (52%) reported knowing about and talking most about the #TakeaKnee crisis (n = 570). The second most commonly selected crisis was CTE (19%; n = 214), followed by Deflategate (12%; n = 133), and the smallest number of respondents reported knowing and communicating about the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis (4%; n = 47). The remaining respondents (13%; n = 143) did not report knowing or talking about NFL crises and were therefore skipped forward in the survey to complete the demographic information.

Crisis attribution was measured by asking respondents which level of the NFL—league, team, or athlete—they felt was most responsible for the incident they selected as the crisis they had heard and communicated about most frequently. Attribution is an important measurement in crisis research because attribution, or crisis responsibility, are major components in driving stakeholders' perceptions regarding the entity experiencing the crisis (Coombs, 2007b). This research uniquely examined the macro (league), meso (team), and micro (athlete) levels of the

NFL to more specifically pinpoint where stakeholders attribute responsibility for various types of crises. Findings indicate that stakeholders' felt that athletes (44%) were most often responsible for crises, and the league came in as a close second (37.7%) with team-level attribution reported the least often (12.3%). See Table 4.2 for a comprehensive listing of stakeholders' perceptions of NFL crises.

Crisis perceptions were measured by asking respondents a series of questions (including the amount of blame, amount of evidence, perceived as accidental/intentional, and crisis history) to rate their perceptions on a seven-point scale where the scale increased in negative perceptions (this is explained in detail in the methods chapter and in Appendix C). For example, in addition to attribution of responsibility at the three levels of the NFL, the amount of blame was also captured (see Table 4.2). Each respondent was asked to rate how much blame s/he placed on the league, team, or athlete for the crisis and level s/he had selected as responsible for the crisis. The higher the number chosen or closer to seven the response, the more blame that respondent reportedly placed at that level for that crisis. The closer to seven the overall rating for each crisis perception question, the more negative the perception. Therefore, the higher the mean for crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes scales, the more negatively stakeholders perceived the crisis.

Crisis perceptions were overall more negative than positive across all three levels of attribution of responsibility. To summarize the scales for crisis perceptions at each level, the overall crisis perceptions for the league (n = 415, M = 4.94, SD = 1.36) and overall crisis perceptions at the team level (n = 133, M = 4.92, SD = 1.47) were moderately negative and the two were quite similar in strength, however, overall crisis perceptions for the athlete level (n = 486, M = 5.77, SD = 1.33) were much more negative. These results indicate that stakeholders'

attribution of responsibility coincided with negative crisis perceptions (Coombs, 2007b, 2004) and were more likely attributed, and more negatively so, at the league and athlete levels than at the team level.

Table 4.2. *Crisis Perceptions: Descriptive Statistics and Scales*

		N	*%*
NFL Crisis Selected	CTE	214	19.3
	Deflategate	133	12
	Elliot | DV	47	4.2
	#TakeaKnee	570	51.5
	Missing	143	12.9
Level of Attribution	League	417	37.7
	Team	136	12.3
	Athlete	487	44
	Missing	67	6

Crisis Perceptions	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Blame Amount League	417	5.42	1.68
Blame Amount Team	136	5.14	1.83
Blame Amount Athlete	487	5.82	1.79
Evidence Amount League	417	4.76	1.97
Evidence Amount Team	136	4.96	1.72
Evidence Amount Athlete	487	5.98	1.57
Accidental/Intentional League	416	4.60	2.01
Accidental/Intentional Team	135	4.83	1.93
Accidental/Intentional Athlete	486	5.99	1.69
One Time or Series League	416	5.00	1.84
One Time or Series Team	133	4.68	1.82
One Time or Series Athlete	486	5.29	1.79
Reputational Outcomes			
Rep Outcomes League1 [Dishonest]	417	4.36	1.94
Rep Outcomes League2 [Do not trust]	417	4.76	1.94
Rep Outcomes League3 [Not concerned]	417	4.32	2.04
Rep Outcomes Team1 [Dishonest]	135	4.27	2.09
Rep Outcomes Team2 [Do not trust]	135	4.76	1.91
Rep Outcomes Team3 [Not concerned]	134	4.44	1.96
Rep Outcomes Athlete1 [Dishonest]	486	3.79	2.22
Rep Outcomes Athlete2 [Do not trust]	485	4.14	2.31
Rep Outcomes Athlete3 [Not concerned]	486	4.25	2.30
SCALES			
Crisis Perceptions League	415	4.94	1.36
Crisis Perceptions Team	133	4.92	1.47
Crisis Perceptions Athlete	486	5.77	1.33
Rep Outcomes League	417	4.48	1.73
Rep Outcomes Team	134	4.50	1.76
Rep Outcomes Athlete	485	4.06	2.02

Comparative analyses were conducted to examine which crises were categorized among the three levels and the strengths and differences of stakeholders' crisis perceptions for each. Following are three subsections, each one to explain the results for each level of attribution (league, team, athlete). The results highlight a series of analysis of variance tests (ANOVAs) that were conducted for a more comprehensive answer to RQ1 beyond simply reporting descriptive statistics. The first subsection offers the crisis perceptions details at the league level.

Crisis perceptions at the league level. Crisis perceptions at the league level were overall moderately negative ($M = 4.94$). Bonferroni post hoc tests indicate that the pairwise comparison between CTE ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.18$), which was reportedly the most negative crisis perceptions at the league level, and Deflategate ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.25$), which reportedly held the least negative crisis perceptions among the four crises attributed to the league level, differed significantly $F(1, 380) = 2.74$, $p < .05$. Although attribution of crisis responsibility at this level held the highest frequency for the #TakeaKnee crisis ($n = 189$), stakeholders perceived the ongoing CTE ($n = 138$) crisis as the most negative ($M = 5.13$) for the league. The Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis was perceived the second most negatively ($M = 4.98$).

Crisis perceptions at the team level. The majority of team level attribution of responsibility occurred for the Deflategate crisis ($n = 51$), followed by CTE ($n = 40$). No statistically significant differences were noted among the four types of crises at the team level for negative crisis perceptions, although the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.28$) and the Deflategate crisis ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.24$) did result in the most negative perceptions at the team level. No pairwise comparisons significantly differed when using a Bonferroni post hoc test.

Crisis perceptions at the athlete level. The vast majority of athlete-level attribution of responsibility resulted from the #TakeaKnee crisis (n = 353), followed by Deflategate (n = 39). Crisis perceptions were overwhelmingly the most negative at the athlete level for the #TakeaKnee crisis (M = 6.15, SD = 1.14) with Deflategate (M = 5.36, SD = 1.08) rating the second most negative, and CTE (M = 4.15, SD = 1.21) reportedly holding the least negative crisis perceptions. According to Bonferroni post hoc tests of pairwise comparisons, the #TakeaKnee crisis significantly differed from all three other crises $F(1, 456) = 44.05$, $p < .001$.

Crisis perceptions across levels and crises. The Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis resulted in the second least negative crisis perceptions at the athlete level and the #TakeaKnee crisis resulted in extremely negative crisis perceptions at the athlete level. Attribution of responsibility was also placed at the league level for both crises and yet at nearly identical means (Elliot [M = 4.98], #TakeaKnee [M = 4.97]). This reveals that stakeholders perceive the same crisis to differing degrees yet attribute responsibility at varying levels. But why? Not enough analyses have yet been conducted to answer exactly why stakeholders would perceive these crises to such drastically differing degrees, but remember that this research exchanged the final crisis assessment factor (relational history) with sport identification, which may be the key. Note especially that none of the four crises resulted in any significant differences among them at the team level, which also received the fewest responses for attribution. An immediate thought might be to discredit this dissertation's argument for the extension of crisis levels to include the team level when researching stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport crises, but caution should be taken with such judgment.

For instance, the Deflategate crisis revealed differing perceptions. Stakeholders categorized Deflategate at all three levels for crisis attribution, yet the crisis resulted in the least

negative perceptions at the league level. This result was a little surprising given the 2016 Super Bowl boos aimed at Commissioner Goodell, but again, those who booed at the Bowl were also those the most highly identified with the New England Patriots team. Still though, the mean was lowest at the league level for Deflategate, but perceptions overall were consistently skewed more negatively than positively.

Next, the reputational outcomes related to these crisis perceptions are reported. The reputational outcomes subsection is presented in the same manner through analyses of variance by level of attribution of responsibility.

Stakeholders' perceptions of reputational outcomes. Sport personas hold just as high a need to manage a positively perceived reputation as any other celebrity persona (Kruse, 1981; L'Etang, 2013), and the prevalence of crises ignited at the athlete level (Schrotenboer, 2014) make this as important a topic as any related to sport crises. Crisis perceptions are the antecedent to reputational outcomes (Coombs, 2007a), and reputational outcomes are the funneling component in the SCCT model to affective and behavioral outcomes.

Reputational outcomes in this research were measured using a 3-item adapted reputation scale (explained in detail in the methods chapter and in Appendix C) along a 1-7 scale, and much like the crisis perceptions measurement, the closer to 7 the response, the more negatively perceived the reputation. Reputational outcomes were measured for the league (n = 417, M = 4.48, SD = 1.73), team (n = 134, M = 4.50, SD = 1.76), and athlete (n = 485, M = 4.06, SD = 2.02) levels. Again, the four NFL crises are analyzed in this second section by conducting a series of analyses of variance at the three levels of attribution of responsibility. Following each level's results is a synopsis of all stakeholders' crisis perceptions in response to RQ1. First, the league level reputational outcomes are reported.

Reputational outcomes at the league level. The crisis perceptions (M = 4.94) at the league level reported above were slightly more negative than the reputational outcomes at the league level (M = 4.48). Reputational outcomes at the league level were the most negative for the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault (M = 5.53, SD = 1.42) crisis $F(1, 381) = 3.08$, $p < .05$. The #TakeaKnee crisis (M = 4.66, SD = 1.77) was the second most negatively perceived reputational outcome at the league level. No pairwise comparisons significantly differed when using a Bonferroni post hoc test.

Reputational outcomes at the team level. Reputational outcomes for the team level were the most negative (M = 4.50) among the three levels, however, team-level attribution was reported the least often (12.3%) and crisis perceptions were the least negative among the three levels (M = 4.92). The Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault (M = 5.67, SD = 1.53) crisis resulted in the most negative reputational outcome at the team level and Deflategate came in second (M = 4.91, SD = 1.66), but there was no statistically significant variance at the team level for reputational outcomes among the four crises. No pairwise comparisons significantly differed when using a Bonferroni post hoc test.

Reputational outcomes at the athlete level. Stakeholders attributed crisis responsibility most often to athletes for NFL crises (44%), and crisis perceptions were also the most negative for athletes among all three levels (M = 5.77), but reputational outcomes were the most tepid among all stakeholders' perceptions (M = 4.06). This reflects opposite results in stakeholders' perceptions from the team level. Bonferroni post hoc tests indicate that the pairwise comparison between Deflategate (M = 4.47, SD = 1.78), which reportedly held the most negative reputational outcomes at the athlete level, and CTE (M = 3.19, SD = 1.66), which reportedly held the least negative reputational outcomes among the four crises attributed to the athlete level, differed

significantly $F(1, 455) = 2.64$, $p < .05$. Reputational outcomes at the athlete level revealed that the Deflategate crisis resulted in the worst reputational perceptions among all four crises. This indicates that stakeholders may have perceived its impact on Tom Brady's reputation more negatively than stakeholders perceived other athletes involved in the other three crises.

Overall, reputational outcomes were slightly more negative than positive. Of note is the fact that although crisis perceptions were the most negative at the athlete level, reputational outcomes for athletes were perceived the least negatively among the three levels. The opposite held true at the league and team levels. This means that the reputations of the teams and the league were affected more negatively than an individual athlete in response to crises. The Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis offers the best example of this outcome. At both the league ($M = 5.23$) and team levels ($M = 5.67$), reputational outcomes were rated most negatively by stakeholders for the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis, yet much more positively at the athlete ($M = 3.9$) level. Moreover, the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis exhibited increased negative reputation perceptions for the league, which statistically supports past rhetorical research that athlete-level transgressions result in transferred negative reputational perceptions for the league when corrective actions are not widely accepted by stakeholders (Harker, 2018). This also supports Kruse's (1981) earlier research that explains sports fan have an innate need to close a crisis-induced dissonance gap when a crisis involving a favorite athlete or team occurs and that need is best met by team- and league-level disciplinary action in response to athlete-level transgressions.

Addressing RQ1. In sum, RQ1 asked to what extent stakeholders were aware of sport-related crises. This research so far has revealed that stakeholders reported more negative than positive crisis perceptions and only slightly negative perceptions for reputational outcomes. The

#TakeaKnee crisis was the most widely known and talked about crisis at the time data were collected and the #TakeaKnee crisis held the most negative crisis perceptions, especially at the athlete level, although reputational outcomes remained quite tepid for that crisis. The ongoing domestic assault crises holds reputational implications at the league level, even though the wrongdoing was carried out at the athlete level, and there was some support in these analyses that team-level reputation also is negatively affected by these athlete-level transgressions.

This research argued for analysis of crisis attribution and perceptions at the team level to expand current research within the sport crisis literature. Few stakeholders opted into attribution of responsibility at the team level and those who did showed no significance in variation of their crisis perceptions. Still, crisis perceptions accounted for nearly half of all variance among team-level reputational outcomes when testing the theoretical consistency of crisis perceptions as a predictor of reputational outcomes (see methods section for a full explanation on this). Taken together, these findings at the team level note optimistic inquiry for sport identification measurement in relation to sport crises because team identification (e.g. fanship) could be what is driving the lack of willingness to attribute crisis responsibility at the team level.

Next, stakeholders' crisis perceptions are examined in relation to sport identification. The next section first provides a brief refresher of the measurement outcomes for sport identification and then addresses $RQ2_{a-c}$ and $H1_{a-b}$ and $H2_{a-b}$ by describing the analytic results of how or if sport identification commingles with crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes.

Sport Identification

This dissertation parsed out the crisis perception assessment factor in the SCCT model—*relational history*—and tested its measurement as sport identification. Sport identification, operationalized as both social identification and individual identification, were measured and are

reported here. $RQ2_{a-c}$ asked to what extent sport identification measurements might associate with or even predict stakeholders' crisis perceptions. To address these questions, sport fandom, sport fanship, and several measures of sport engagement were analyzed. The fandom and fanship scales also aid in testing $H1_{a-b}$ and $H2_{a-b}$, which posit that higher levels of fandom and fanship result in more positive crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. A brief overview of the identification and engagement measurements is presented before these research questions and hypotheses are addressed.

Measurement of sport identification. Sport identification has been measured in sport-related studies interchangeably as fandom and fanship. In this dissertation, each was measured with its own distinctive, multi-item scale. Fandom was operationalized as a socially connected identity with sport (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Fanship was operationalized as individual identification with a specific NFL team, often referred to in fan behavior studies as team identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

To address $RQ2_a$, which asked the extent of sport identification among NFL stakeholders, both fandom and fanship were measured. The fandom scale (n = 1,100, M = 3.28, SD = 1.78) revealed relatively weak social identification with sport. The fanship scale (n = 990, M = 4.80, SD = 1.61) revealed moderate NFL team identification. Recall here that those who answered that they favored no NFL team (n = 116) were scaled to a sport fanship measurement for a favorite sport team outside of the NFL (M = 2.59, SD = 1.79). Since these respondents reported no identification with the NFL through a favorite team, these cases were not included in subsequent fanship-specific analyses. For a full listing of descriptive statistics for sport identification, please see Table 4.3.

Respondents were also asked general *sport engagement* questions, including how many hours they spend each week consuming sport (M = 8.56, SD = 9.15) and how many hours they spend each week consuming NFL, specifically (M = 4.96, SD = 6.16). Respondents were also asked whether they participated in any fantasy sport (yes = 29%, no = 71%) and in fantasy football, specifically (yes = 28%, no = 72%). If a respondent answered yes to the fantasy football question, s/he was also asked to specify how frequently s/he participated on a 1-7 scale (n = 301, M = 5.15, SD = 1.98).

Table 4.3. *Sport Identification: Descriptive Statistics and Scales*

		N	*%*
Fantasy Sport	No	787	71.1
	Yes	320	28.9
Fantasy Football	No	799	72.2
	Yes	308	27.8
Top 10 NFL Teams	Cowboys	89	8
	Patriots	78	7
	Bears	73	6.6
	Packers	63	5.7
	Giants	61	5.5
	Steelers	57	5.1
	Lions	40	3.6
	Bills	37	3.3
	Falcons	34	3.2
	Eagles	34	3.2
NFL Conference	NFC	703	63.5
	AFC	404	36.5

	N	*M*	*SD*
Time Spent in Hours: Sport	1101	8.56	9.15
Time Spent in Hours: NFL	1099	4.96	6.16
Fantasy	301	5.15	1.98
Changed my work schedule to accommodate my interest in sport.	1106	2.69	2.11
I would spend all my money on sport if I could.	1105	2.22	1.84
I want everyone to know I am connected to sport.	1106	3.24	2.08
When sports are popular, I feel great.	1104	3.49	2.09
I feel a purposeful connection to sport.	1106	3.68	2.16
I strongly identify with sport.	1106	3.93	2.18
I would devote all my time to sport if I could.	1106	2.82	2.04
I want to be friends with others who also enjoy sport.	1106	4.16	2.10
Fandom Scale	**1100**	**3.28**	**1.78**
How important is it to you that your favorite NFL team wins?	991	5.35	1.72
How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your favorite NFL team?	991	5.36	1.69
How closely do you follow (via news, social media, etc.,) your favorite NFL team?	991	4.78	1.87
How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of your favorite NFL team?	990	4.86	1.92
How important is being a fan of your favorite NFL team?	991	4.81	1.90
How much do you dislike your favorite NFL team's rivals?	991	4.29	2.05
How much do you display your favorite NFL team's name/logo where you live/work or on your clothing?	991	4.16	2.12
Fanship Scale	**990**	**4.80**	**1.61**

As mentioned, *favorite NFL team* was captured. The top ten favorite NFL teams included the Dallas Cowboys (8%; n = 89), New England Patriots (7%; n = 78), Chicago Bears (7%; n = 73), Green Bay Packers (6%; n = 63), New York Giants (5.5%; n = 61), Pittsburgh Steelers (5%; n = 57), Detroit Lions (4%; n = 40), Buffalo Bills (3%; n = 37), Atlanta Falcons (3%; n = 34), and the Philadelphia Eagles (3%; n = 34).

$RQ2_a$ asked to what extent stakeholders identify with the NFL. Respondents reported being fair-weather fans of sports in general, yet identified more highly with their NFL team. Team identification additionally revealed two of the top ten most frequently reported favorite NFL teams are two of the teams specifically implicated in the crises under examination in this research: the Dallas Cowboys (the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis) and the New England Patriots (Deflategate). Now that the extent of sport identification has been identified, $RQ2_b$ can be examined.

Associations between sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions. $RQ2_b$ asked how sport identification associates with stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL crises. Following are three subsections to answer this research question. The subsections are separated into the three levels of crisis attribution (each were dummy coded for analyses). First, the associations at the league level between sport identification, crisis perceptions, and reputational outcomes are presented. Then, the associations for the team level are presented, and then the associations for the athlete level. Each subsection reports data specific to that level only, so the fandom and fanship scales are restated. Each subsection presents results for fandom and then for fanship, and the crisis-specific opt-in results wrap-up the associative assessments for each level.

Sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions at the league level. Fandom (M = 3.40, SD = 1.72), a measure of social identification with sport in general, was slightly positively

and significantly correlated with crisis perceptions at the league level ($r = .124$, $p < .05$). Fandom and reputational outcomes were also slightly significantly correlated ($r = .102$, $p < .05$). This means stakeholders who are reportedly more highly socially identified with sport were slightly more likely to report negative perceptions of the league in relation to crises, and they perceived the league's reputation slightly more negative, too. These results (see Table 4.4) make sense when combined with the crises significantly correlated at the league level.

Fandom was associated with crisis attribution at the league level for CTE ($r = .154$, $p < .01$) and the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault ($r = .179$, $p < .01$) crisis, yet negatively correlated with the #TakeaKnee ($r = -.104$, $p < .05$) crisis. This indicates that those who are more socially aware held the league more responsible for the harm being done to athletes related to the CTE crisis, and the repeated occurrences of NFL players engaging in domestic assault. In other words, those socially aware are projecting these two athlete-related crises onto the league for the league's breakdown in oversight or ability to affect positive change. Alternatively, the #TakeaKnee crisis, also arguably ignited at the athlete level, was significantly unlikely to be attributed at the league level. These findings show that fandom does associate with stakeholders' perceptions at the league level.

Fanship ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.63$), the individual-level of identification that was measured via team identification among NFL stakeholders, showed similar correlation results as fandom for crisis perceptions at the league level ($r = .121$, $p < .05$), but fanship did not significantly correlate with reputational outcomes at the league level. Those high in fanship were those significantly associated with placing attribution at the league level for the Deflategate ($r = .104$, $p < .05$) crisis and the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault ($r = .168$, $p < .01$) crisis. This means that NFL stakeholders high in team identification perceived the league negatively in relation to crises

affecting the two most favored teams among respondents, but held no negative or positive perceptions regarding the league's reputational outcomes, overall.

To synthesize these league-level results, neither fandom nor fanship necessarily correlated with the selection of league-level crisis attribution, yet slightly significant positive correlations did exist for both measurements of sport identification among negative crisis perceptions. Only fandom was significantly associated with reputational outcomes. Fanship apparently associated with crisis attribution transferred to the league level for the two crises that were arguably more team or athlete specific (i.e. the Deflategate and the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crises).

Table 4.4. *Associations of Fandom and Fanship with Stakeholders' Perceptions*

	LEAGUE		**TEAM**		**ATHLETE**	
	Fandom	Fanship	Fandom	Fanship	Fandom	Fanship
CTE	.154**	0.009	-0.03	-0.141	0.04	0.019
Deflategate	-0.028	.104*	0.11	.211*	0.062	0.046
Elliot DV	.179**	.168**	0.048	0.061	.176**	.100*
TakeaKnee	-.104*	-0.082	-0.047	-0.143	-.098*	-0.065
Crisis Perceptions	.124*	.121*	.341**	.376**	-0.053	-0.036
Reputational Outcomes	.102*	0.024	.411**	.442**	0.072	.108*

** = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$*

Note: This is a combination of the results of the correlation matrices conducted for each level's analyses.

Sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions at the team level. The team level revealed the highest means for sport identification and the strongest associations among sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions. Fandom ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.98$) at the team level significantly moderately correlated with both crisis perceptions ($r = .341$, $p < .01$) and reputational outcomes ($r = .411$, $p < .01$). Fandom did not associate with the attribution of crisis responsibility at the team level for any of the four crises.

Fanship ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.45$), which is a reflection of team identification, featured the strongest correlations with crisis perceptions ($r = .376$, $p < .01$) and reputational outcomes ($r =$

.442, $p < .01$). Those who held the highest levels of team identification were also those who held the most negative perceptions, which at the surface seems a surprising finding that is counterintuitive to team identification. What is important to remember here is that there are 32 teams with which stakeholders could identify. The fact that fanship only associated with attributing the Deflategate ($r = .211$ $p < .05$) crisis to the team level, and again to the strongest degree of association among all crises across all levels, suggests promising anticipation for the fan-to-rival fan behavior analyses to come later.

Fandom ($r = .105$, $p < .01$) and fanship ($r = .105$, $p < .01$) both correlated, and to the same strength, for team level crisis attribution, which means both were positively associated with team-level crisis attribution. This result differs from the league level, which revealed no significance, and the athlete level, which is discussed next.

Sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions at the athlete level. The athlete level resulted in the weakest associations among sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions. Fandom ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.72$) did not significantly associate with crisis perceptions or reputational outcomes. Fandom did positively correlate with crisis attribution at the athlete level for the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault ($r = .176$, $p < .01$) crisis, and negatively correlated with attribution of responsibility at the athlete level for the #TakeaKnee ($r = -.098$, $p < .05$) crisis.

Fanship ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.62$) also did not significantly associate with crisis perceptions, but fanship and reputational outcomes did significantly, albeit slightly, correlate at the athlete level ($r = .108$, $p < .05$). Fanship positively correlated with athlete-level crisis attribution only for the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault ($r = .100$, $p < .05$) crisis.

And finally, fandom ($r = -.103$, $p < .01$) and fanship ($r = -.072$, $p < .05$) negatively correlated for athlete level crisis attribution, which means the higher a stakeholders' fandom or

fanship levels, the less likely stakeholders were to attribute responsibility at the athlete level, which statistically supports prior critical cultural research (Kruse 1981, 1979).

Addressing RQ2b. Cautious interpretation of the findings at the league and athlete levels are recommended because statistical significance can be achieved even among small correlations in large data samples such as this. Still, associations do exist among sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions.

Crisis perceptions were associated with sport identification among stakeholders who attributed responsibility at the league and team levels, but not among those who attributed responsibility at the athlete level. Furthermore, opposite associations for fandom and fanship and reputational outcomes existed between the league and the athlete levels. Those with a social identification (fandom) with sport in general rated league reputation more negatively and those with higher team identification (fanship) rated athlete reputations more negatively. This indicates that identified and engaged NFL stakeholders are paying closer attention at the micro levels of crisis while those who identify more broadly with sport are examining NFL-related crises at a higher, more macro, league level. These associations also indicate that those with the least amount of sport identification were those most likely to select the #TakeaKnee crisis and attribute responsibility across the three levels, which is not surprising given the political polarization of this particular crisis.

Fandom and fanship both were highest among those who attributed crisis responsibility at the team level. Crisis perceptions correlating highest at the team level indicates that individuals may indeed be filtering their perceptions through a personal identification as a fan of a specific NFL team. Resultantly, these findings further support a "die-hard" fan's dedication (Kruse, 1981; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1990). What is still unclear, however, is

whether sport identification is an *influencer* to stakeholders' perceptions. The next section examines this conundrum in response to $RQ2_c$.

Sport identification as a predictor of crisis perceptions. $RQ2_c$ asked whether sport identification is a predictor of crisis perceptions. To address this research question, a series of linear regression analyses were conducted. First, fandom was examined for crisis perceptions and then fandom was examined for reputational outcomes at each of the three levels, respectively. Fanship then underwent the same series of analyses. All regressions controlled for stakeholders' demographic information (significant results are reported in tables 4.5-4.10 located in the appendices). Findings are reported first for fandom and then fanship, and each of the two sections are further broken down by level of crisis attribution for crisis perceptions, and then for reputational outcomes. The data for each respondent was collected at the crisis attribution level into which the respondent self-selected. This data collection process inhibited the use of regression analyses across all levels of crisis attribution for all respondents across all crises in one large regression analysis.

Fandom as a predictor of stakeholders' perceptions. Fandom was measured as a social identification with sport in general. The mean result for fandom among NFL stakeholders was at or just below the median point of measurement, meaning none were "die-hard" overt sport fans. Still, fandom was a significant predictor for stakeholders' perceptions.

Crisis perceptions. Fandom was a significant predictor of crisis perceptions at the league and team levels but not at the athlete level. Fandom ($\beta = .174$, $p < .001$) was a significant predictor for crisis perceptions at the league level $F(8, 409) = 6.31$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .11$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .09$. The demographic predictors for crisis perceptions at the league level included older, non-white stakeholders who were educated Republicans. At the team level, fandom ($\beta = .404$, $p <$

.001) was again a significant predictor for crisis perceptions $F(8, 129) = 3.98$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .14$, and the only demographic predictor was age ($\beta = .192$, $p < .05$). At the athlete level, fandom was not a predictor of crisis perceptions but older white conservative Republicans were most likely to report negative crisis perceptions at this level.

Table 4.5. *League Level: Regression Analyses Fandom | Crisis Perceptions*

n = 410	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	0.15**	0.209***
Gender[a]	0.059	0.01
Ethnicity[a]	-0.146**	-0.13**
Education	0.117*	0.105*
Income	0.023	0.013
PolID[a]	0.068	0.07
Partisanship[a]	0.148*	0.148*
Fandom		0.174***
R^2	0.087	0.112
Adjusted R^2	0.071	0.094
F for change in R^2	5.47***	11.26***

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Table 4.6. *Team Level: Regression Analyses Fandom | Crisis Perceptions*

n = 130	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	0.098	0.192*
Gender[a]	0.031	-0.113
Ethnicity[a]	-0.123	-0.04
Education	0.032	0.019
Income	0.212*	0.132
PolID[a]	0.035	0.064
Partisanship[a]	0.145	0.141
Fandom		0.404***
R^2	0.019	0.197
Adjusted R^2	0.022	0.14
F for change in R^2	1.39	16.45***

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Reputational outcomes. Fandom was also analyzed in relation to reputational outcomes in a similar series of regression analyses. At the league level, the models were insignificant for demographics and fandom. At the team level, fandom ($\beta = .400$, $p < .001$) was a highly significant predictor for reputational outcomes $F(8, 129) = 4.12$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .21$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .16$, and fandom was the only significant predictor. At the athlete level, fandom was not a predictor. However, stakeholders who were conservative Republicans were again those most likely to perceive negative reputational outcomes for athletes.

Table 4.7. *Team Level: Regression Analyses Fandom | Reputational Outcomes*

n = 412	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	-0.235	0.788
Gender[a]	1.497	-0.113
Ethnicity[a]	-0.842	0.035
Education	0.175	0.041
Income	2.406*	1.702
PolID[a]	0.579	0.94
Partisanship[a]	-0.176	-0.225
Fandom		.400***
R^2	0.102	0.214
Adjusted R^2	0.051	0.162
F for change in R^2	1.99	17.19***

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Fandom was a significant predictor of crisis perceptions at the league and team levels, and a significant predictor for reputational outcomes at the team level. Next is a look at fanship as a predictor.

Fanship as a predictor of stakeholders' perceptions. Fanship was measured as a indicator of NFL team identification. The mean result for fanship among NFL stakeholders was moderately high, meaning NFL stakeholders were not necessarily "die-hard" in their fanship but they were overt NFL fans, nonetheless. Fanship underwent the same analyses as fandom to investigate whether fanship is an influencer of stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport-related crises.

Crisis perceptions. Fanship ($\beta = .156$, $p < .01$) was a significant predictor of crisis perceptions at the league level $F(8, 381) = 5.54$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .11$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .09$. Demographics also indicate that age and education were also predictors of crisis perceptions at

this level. At the team level, fanship (β = .360, p < .001) was again a significant predictor of crisis perceptions $F(8, 120) = 3.44$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .20$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .14$, and was the sole predictor at the team level. At the athlete level, fanship was not a predictor of crisis perceptions but older white conservative Republicans were again those most likely to report negative crisis perceptions at this level.

Table 4.8. *League Level: Regression Analyses Fanship | Crisis Perceptions*

n = 382	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	0.154**	0.179***
Gender[a]	0.059	0.037
Ethnicity[a]	-0.128*	-0.103
Education	0.126*	0.133*
Income	0.013	0.023
PolID[a]	0.077	0.086
Partisanship[a]	0.125*	0.116
Fanship		0.156**
R^2	0.084	0.106
Adjusted R^2	0.067	0.087
F for change in R^2	4.89***	9.32**

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Table 4.9. *Team Level: Regression Analyses Fanship | Crisis Perceptions*

n = 121	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	0.057	0.067
Gender[a]	-0.004	-0.037
Ethnicity[a]	-0.109	-0.062
Education	0.041	0.068
Income	0.215*	0.117
PolID[a]	0.021	0.031
Partisanship[a]	0.124	0.135
Fanship		0.36***
R^2	0.79	0.197
Adjusted R^2	0.022	0.14
F for change in R^2	1.39	16.45***

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Reputational outcomes. There was no significance in the fanship regression model at the league level, and income was the only predictor of reputational outcomes. Fanship ($\beta = .368$, $p < .001$) was however a significant predictor of reputational outcomes at the team level $F(8, 120) = 4.09$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .23$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .17$, and again fanship was the sole predictor at this level. At the athlete level, fanship was not a predictor and again conservative Republicans were those most likely to report negative reputational outcomes at this level.

Table 4.10. *Team Level: Regression Analyses Fanship | Reputational Outcomes*

n = 121	MODEL ONE	MODEL TWO
	β	*β*
Age	-0.033	-0.015
Gender[a]	0.082	0.044
Ethnicity[a]	-0.074	-0.026
Education	0.021	0.037
Income	0.267**	0.168
PolID[a]	0.083	0.093
Partisanship[a]	-0.081	-0.072
Fanship		0.368***
R^2	0.1	0.226
Adjusted R^2	0.048	0.171
F for change in R^2	1.87	17.70***

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded variables: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Addressing RQ2c. To answer $RQ2_c$ fandom and fanship were influential to both crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, but only in certain instances. At the league level, both fandom and fanship were significant predictors of crisis perceptions but neither predicted reputational outcomes. At the team level, fandom and fanship were both significant predictors of stakeholders' perceptions: crisis perceptions *and* reputational outcomes. Moreover, fanship was the sole predictor (meaning no socio-demographics were significant) for both crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes at the team level. And finally, none of the regression analyses at the athlete level found fandom or fanship to be predictors of crisis perceptions or reputational outcomes. As noted above, the non-significance of sport identification and the consistent significance of political measurements note that the #TakeaKnee crisis is perceived more as a politically charged crisis than a sport-related crisis.

The findings of this research to this point reveal stakeholders' overall sport-related crisis perceptions and how sport identification associates with and even predicts those perceptions in

some instances. Now, it is time to test $H1_{a-b}$ and $H2_{a-b}$ to examine the directional significance of sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions.

Directional significance of sport identification on crisis perceptions. The associations and predictability of sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions have been identified but the directional hypotheses relating to these variables remain to be tested. $H1_{a-b}$ and $H2_{a-b}$ posited that higher levels of fandom and higher levels of fanship result in more positive stakeholders' perceptions for crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. To test these hypotheses several independent t-test were conducted using split-high variables for fandom and fanship (see Table 4.11 for specifics on both variables). Results are reported first by fandom ($H1_{a-b}$) and then fanship ($H2_{a-b}$). Each findings subsection is divided into crisis perceptions and then reputational outcomes, and findings are reported by level of crisis attribution (league, team, athlete).

Table 4.11. *Split-High Variables of Fandom and Fanship*

		N	*%*
Split Fandom	*M* = 3.28		
	under mean	582	52.6
	over mean	525	47.4
Split Fanship	*M* = 4.80		
	under mean	555	50.1
	over mean	552	49.9

Fandom. $H1_a$ posited that higher fandom levels result in more positive than negative crisis perceptions. $H1_a$ was not supported at the league level. $H1_a$ at the team level leans to the opposite direction hypothesized. For example, crisis perceptions were less negative ($M = 4.39$) among stakeholders who reported lower levels of fandom and more negative ($M = 5.32$) among those who reported higher levels of fandom $t(131) = -3.79$, $p < .001$. $H1_a$ was not supported at the athlete level either.

$H1_b$ posits that higher fandom levels result in increased positive perceptions of reputation for the league, team, and athlete levels. $H1_b$ was not supported at the league level. Reputational outcomes at the team level again tracked the opposite direction hypothesized. Reputational outcomes at the team level were less negative ($M = 3.89$) among stakeholders who reported lower levels of fandom and significantly more negative ($M = 4.97$) among those who reported higher levels of fandom $t(132) = -3.67$, $p < .001$. $H1_b$ was not supported at the athlete level.

Cumulatively, those higher in fandom consistently reported more negative crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, but only at the team level were those differences significant. Next, the same series of hypothesis testing is conducted on fanship levels and stakeholders' perceptions.

Fanship. To test the $H2_a$ and $H2_b$ hypotheses a series of independent t-tests were conducted using the split-half fanship variable. First, hypothesis testing for crisis perceptions are reported and then the hypothesis testing for reputational outcomes are reported.

$H2_a$ was supported at the league level, and as was the case in the fandom analyses, sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions lean the opposite direction hypothesized. At the league level, crisis perceptions were less negative ($M = 4.80$) among stakeholders who reported lower levels of fanship and were more negative ($M = 5.07$) among those who reported higher levels of fandom $t(413) = -2.03$, $p < .05$. $H2_a$ was also supported at the team level because again crisis perceptions were less negative ($M = 4.34$) among stakeholders who reported lower levels of fanship and were more negative ($M = 5.25$) among those who reported higher levels of fanship $t(131) = -3.58$, $p < .001$. $H2_a$ was not supported at the athlete level.

$H2_b$ assesses fanship levels and reputational outcomes. $H2_b$ was not supported at the league level. $H2_b$ was supported at the team level, but in the opposite direction with stakeholders

reporting less negative perceptions ($M = 3.76$) with lower levels of fanship than the more negative perceptions ($M = 4.89$) reported among those with higher levels of fanship $t(132) = -3.72$, $p < .001$. $H2_b$ was not supported at the athlete level.

Again, those higher in fanship consistently reported more negative crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes across all three levels of crisis attribution. The league and team levels were significant for crisis perceptions and only the team level showed significance for reputational outcomes.

The fandom and fanship hypotheses findings show that sport identification as predictor of stakeholders' perceptions are tracking in an opposite direction hypothesized within this research, which initially posited that higher levels of sport identification would result in more positive stakeholders' perceptions. The alternate findings coupled with the fact that the team level is the level of crisis attribution where the strongest and most consistent significant findings exist, sheds light on new knowledge that stakeholders' perceptions may not necessarily rest within one's own connectedness or identification with team sport (Kruse, 1981), but rather the opposite—rivalry. In other words, sport identification is not providing a direct protective layer upon one's own beloved sport or sport entity, but instead these results suggest sport identification is a predicative element for activating a similar response to sport crises as is witnessed when a fan's rival team experiences a game loss.

Overall, sport identification levels were not extreme among survey respondents. Fandom levels were at or slightly below the median point across the levels of crisis attributions. Fanship levels were moderately increased. Still, fandom and fanship definitely associate with stakeholders' perceptions, and are even influential to stakeholders' perceptions in some instances. The fact that associations and predictability both exist while the direction of the

hypotheses were not supported makes the specific role of sport identification in assessing sport-related crises even more intriguing.

The consistently significant results at the team level across all tests further supports this dissertation's argument that sport-related crises should include this level of investigation. Taken together with the directional hypotheses, it appears that crisis perceptions are tracking along the underlying fan-to-rival behaviors in response to game outcomes. The next section examines three such fan behaviors (CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude) and measures how or if the three might deepen the understanding of this combination of sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport-related crises.

Fan Behaviors

$RQ3_{a-c}$ and H3 are addressed by examining the three fan behaviors measured in this research: CORFing, (cutting off reflective failure), blasting (trash talking other sport fans), and schadenfreude (feeling joy at another's adversity). This section first addresses $RQ3_{a-b}$ for each of the three fan behaviors, separately. Then, the findings for $RQ3_c$ and H3, both of which further address schadenfreude, are presented.

Table 4.12. *Fan Behaviors Descriptive Statistics and Scales*

	N	*M*	*SD*
CORF (W)	989	2.69	1.94
CORF (L)	989	3.45	2.08
CORF Avoid	**989**	**3.07**	**1.80**
Blast (W)	988	3.23	2.18
Blast (L)	988	2.84	2.01
Happy	991	5.41	1.79
Pride	991	5.14	1.83
Comm Joy	991	4.36	2.09
Comm Pride	991	4.15	2.08
Insult	990	2.94	2.18
Schadenfreude Scale	**990**	**4.40**	**1.65**

(W) = after a win, (L) = after a loss

The following subsections—CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude—address $RQ3_a$, which explores the associations among fan behaviors and sport identification, and $RQ3_b$, which seeks the same answers concerning fan behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions. First, the results for the associative relationships between fan behaviors and sport identification (fandom and fanship) are presented, and then the findings for the associative relationships between fan behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions (crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes) follow. Pearson correlations are presented to discuss the strength of any existing relationships among the variables. Each fan behavior's subsection reports findings for all three levels of crisis attribution. To begin, the associative findings for CORFing are presented.

CORFing. CORFing is a regressive information-seeking behavior, also discussed as the purposeful action of disconnecting from one's team following a loss of a game (Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). CORFing was measured as a two-item information and interpersonal communication avoidance scale ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.80$). Associations among CORFing and sport identification, and CORFing and stakeholders' perceptions are presented here to answer both $RQ3_{a\text{-}b}$.

The associations among CORFing and sport identification, revealed that CORFing is moderately associated with both fandom ($r = .376$, $p < .01$) and fanship ($r = .373$, $p < .01$). The similarity in strength of these two associations indicates that those who identify socially with sport and those who identify strongly with a specific NFL team engage equally in information and interpersonal communication avoidance strategies when a favored sport entity performs poorly.

This dissertation investigates whether NFL stakeholders perceive crises in a similar manner as they perceive game wins and losses. An exploration into whether any initial

associations exist must first be conducted to explore those possibilities because these areas of research have not yet been connected in such a manner. For example, the CORFing literature has noted that it is mostly the "fair-weather" fans who actively cut themselves off from losing teams, and the "die-hard" fans will remain committed no matter the number of game losses in a season (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Translating this to crises, will Patriots fans cut themselves off from the team because of Deflategate? Will Cowboys fans distance themselves because of yet another social or moral wrongdoing committed by one of the team's players? Or will Cowboys fans and Patriots fans choose to overlook these crises and remain committed to their beloved sport entity or actor no matter the transgression? This research explores such questions concerning sport crises because sport fans' loyalty may well result in more committed responses than a consumer deciding whether to continue a relationship by still purchasing goods and services from a more traditional organization experiencing a crisis.

The correlation matrices (see Table 4.13) indicate that CORFing was positively significantly correlated with crisis perceptions only at the league level ($r = .228$, $p < .01$). The absence of associations at the team and athlete levels indicates that NFL stakeholders are not necessarily practicing information avoidance strategies in response to crisis.

CORFing correlated with all three levels for reputational outcomes, however. CORFing and reputational outcomes were slightly positively correlated at the league level ($r = .195$, $p < .01$), associated strongest at the team level ($r = .294$, $p < .01$), and correlated at the athlete level ($r = .224$, $p < .01$). The associations between CORFing and reputational outcomes indicate that the more negatively the reputational outcomes are perceived, the more likely NFL stakeholders are to avoid seeking additional information.

Table 4.13. *Fan Behaviors, Sport Identification, and Stakeholders' Perceptions*

		CORFing	Blasting	Schadenfreude
Sport Identification	Fandom	.376**	.467**	.519**
	Fanship	.373**	.504**	.739**
Crisis Perceptions	League	.228**	.160**	.139**
	Team	0.114	0.142	.354**
	Athlete	-0.089	-0.067	-0.029
Reputational Outcomes	League	.195**	.134**	0.013
	Team	.294**	.232*	.322**
	Athlete	.224**	.177**	.225**

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

CORFing was associated with sport identification and reputational outcomes, but was only associated with crisis perceptions at the league level. This means that NFL stakeholders are not "cutting off" from crises at the team and athlete levels. This behavior could reflect one of two things: either these results reflect prior research findings that highly-identified sport fans do not separate from their beloved teams no matter how badly the team performs (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993); or these findings indicate that there is more of a fan-to-rival filtering happening in response to crisis perceptions. In other words, the NFL stakeholders selected into crises related to rival teams and not a crisis related to their own favorite team. Next, the associations between fan-to-rival fan behaviors, sport identification, and stakeholders' perceptions are presented.

Blasting. Blasting is an out-group derogation and an in-group bias that is activated as an image management strategy (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011). Blasting was measured by asking stakeholders how likely they were to "trash talk" others following game wins and losses of their favorite team ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.99$). Associations were reviewed in this subsection regarding blasting and sport identification and blasting and stakeholders' perceptions.

Blasting was strongly associated with fandom ($r = .467$, $p < .01$) and fanship ($r = .504$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, fanship was more strongly associated with blasting than fandom, which was

not a surprising finding given that fanship demonstrates higher individualized identification levels than fandom and would therefore result in increased in-group bias and out-group derogation.

Blasting was also associated with both of the stakeholders' perceptions. Blasting was slightly positively significantly correlated with crisis perceptions but only at the league level (r = .160, $p < .01$). Blasting also was slightly positively correlated with reputational outcomes, and those associations were significant across the league (r = .134, $p < .01$), team (r = .232, $p < .05$), and athlete (r = .177, $p < .01$) levels. These findings indicate that NFL stakeholders are not blasting at the team and athlete levels in response to negative crisis perceptions but they are doing so in response to negatively perceived reputational outcomes.

In sum, blasting is an identification-driven out-group derogation that is exercised among those attributing crisis responsibility at the league level in response to negative league-level crises, but not team- or athlete-level crises. Blasting's association with all three levels of negative reputation perceptions, and the strongest of those associations at the team level, reflects this fan behavior's propensity for fan-to-rival out-group derogation, especially in response to entities or actors the stakeholders perceived negatively. These findings further support the possibility that sport-related crises are filtered through sport rivalry.

Schadenfreude. Schadenfreude, which is a feeling of joy at another's adversity, aids in the exploration of stakeholders' perceptions being filtered in a manner similar to game outcome rivalry (Cikara et al., 2011; Delakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach & Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958). Schadenfreude is measured here as a five-item fan behavior communication scale (M = 4.40, SD = 1.65) that was created to measure schadenfreude in

response to general sport rivalry. Associations were again reviewed between schadenfreude and sport identification, and schadenfreude and stakeholders' perceptions.

Schadenfreude was especially strongly associated with both sport identification measurements. Fandom was significantly positively correlated with schadenfreude ($r = .519$, $p < .01$), but the highest correlation among all fan behaviors and sport identification occurred for schadenfreude and fanship ($r = .739$, $p < .01$). This indicates that NFL stakeholders feel and communicate great joy, feel and communicate much pride, and even insult their rivals, in response to game outcomes.

Schadenfreude associated with stakeholders' perceptions in a different manner from CORFing and blasting. Schadenfreude and crisis perceptions were again associated at the league level ($r = .139$, $p < .01$), yet not as strongly as the prior two fan behaviors. More importantly, however, is the fact that schadenfreude more strongly—and uniquely—associated with crisis perceptions at the team level ($r = .354$, $p < .01$). This indicates that there is a moderate association between feeling joy at another team's adversity and negatively perceived crises.

Schadenfreude also performed uniquely from the other fan behaviors in relation to reputational outcomes. Schadenfreude was not associated with reputational outcomes at the league level. Schadenfreude was associated with reputational outcomes at team ($r = .322$, $p < .01$) and athlete ($r = .225$, $p < .01$) levels, and both were stronger than was present for CORFing and blasting.

The findings for schadenfreude indicate that those who are more highly identified with sport and especially an NFL team take great joy in the adversity experienced by rivals during times of crisis. These findings are strongest at the team level for stakeholders' perceptions, which

additionally supports the associative results up to this point that crises are likely filtered in a manner similar to general sport rivalry.

Addressing RQ3a-b. To address $RQ3_a$, which asked in what ways fan behaviors associate with sports identification and stakeholders' perceptions, all three of the fan behaviors were positively and significantly associated with sport identification. These findings support prior research that "die hard" fans are less likely to disconnect themselves from their favorite team during less-favorable times of game losses. These findings also support the identification-driven in-group bias and out-group derogation related to fan-to-rival behaviors. Furthermore, the strength of the association between schadenfreude and sport identification—especially fanship (e.g. team identification)—indicates that there is at least some truth to past claims of feelings of oneness among "die hard" sport fans and their favorite team (Kruse 1981, 1979; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1990), but this research advanced such claims to include sport fans' crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes related to sport crises.

In response to $RQ3_b$, all three of the fan behaviors were again positively and significantly associated with stakeholders' perceptions. CORFing and blasting correlated with crisis perceptions, but only at the league level. Schadenfreude also correlated with crisis perceptions at the league level and additionally, as well as more strongly, at the team level. The three fan behaviors correlated with reputational outcomes, too, with the exception of schadenfreude at the league level. It should be noted here that none of the three fan behaviors were associated with crisis perceptions at athlete level. All three of the fan behaviors were nevertheless associated with reputational outcomes at athlete level.

Overall, these associative results show promise for the filtering of sport-related crisis perceptions in similar ways as general sport rivalry and game outcomes among sport fans. The

lack of CORFing and blasting at the team level indicates that stakeholders are keeping informed about crises, but topically, the crisis may not necessary lend itself to "trash talking" others. Still, great joy is associated with negatively perceived team-level crises as well as negatively perceived reputational outcomes.

These findings show promise for an association between fan-to-rival behaviors and sport-related crises. To continue researching schadenfreude as a crisis response emotion, a second measurement of schadenfreude was examined. $RQ3_c$ and H3 are explored in the following section regarding these investigations.

Schadenfreude as an emotional crisis response. A second measurement of schadenfreude was conducted to analyze its role as an emotional response to crisis. The connections SCCT makes between emotions and crisis have long included sympathy and anger. These emotions are historically tied to crisis perceptions and attribution of crisis responsibility. For example, when the Malden Mills factory fire destroyed the organization's means of conducting business, stakeholders felt great sympathy for the organization and its employees who were suddenly out of work at Christmas (Ulmer, 2011). Alternatively, stakeholders became enraged at General Motors when it was discovered that the motor vehicle manufacturer had never recalled a faulty ignition switch and hundreds of customers died because of the faulty switch (Yarbrough, 2014).

Schadenfreude, which is defined as feeling joy in another's adversity, is another emotional reaction to crisis that is an emerging concept in relation to crisis perceptions. To better explain, stakeholders would not feel joyful about employees being out of work from the Malden Mills fire, nor would stakeholders feel joy concerning the deaths of motorists, but in sport great joy is taken in a rival's adversity such as when a rival team losses a game. The last section's

findings revealed that associations also exist among schadenfreude and negatively-perceived crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. It is for reasons such as these that schadenfreude is considered an additional crisis emotion in this research.

Considering this, a relatively remedial albeit unique investigation into emotions in response to sport crises was investigated. The already-burdensome length of the survey instrument restricted the ability to deep dive into the strength or amount of emotion being felt, but the overall categorization of emotion was nevertheless collected. Respondents were asked which of three emotions (sympathy, anger, or joy), or no emotion at all, they felt in response to the crisis in which they had self-selected. Four questions were asked pertaining to emotion categorization: the respondents' overall feeling concerning the crisis, and then three questions were asked concerning the woeful repercussions of the crisis. To explain, respondents reported whether they felt sympathy, anger or joy in response to the suspension of any individual connected to the sport crisis, in response to legal troubles that resulted from the crisis, and in response to the loss of sponsors for the league, team or athlete experiencing the crisis (Delakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). The presence of crisis emotion was examined to answer $RQ3_c$, which asked whether schadenfreude differed from other crisis emotions in response to sport-related crisis repercussions. H3 is also tested in the next section to examine schadenfreude as a crisis response and its association with stakeholders' perceptions.

Emotional response to crises. The crisis repercussions questions gauged emotional response to the suspensions, legal troubles, or loss of sponsors. These questions were asked for the crisis and attribution level each stakeholder selected. Reported here are the descriptive frequencies for each emotion's 3-item composite index (see methods chapter for details on these

measurements, reliability and consistency testing, and creation of composite indexes) in response to $RQ3_c$.

At the league level, more stakeholders responded they felt anger (n = 216) in response to all three of the crisis repercussions questions than schadenfreude (n = 166) or sympathy (n = 138). CTE and the #TakeaKnee crises were most often attributed to the league level. Taken together, stakeholders reported feeling more angry than feeling joyful or sympathetic about the repercussions the league has faced because of the ongoing concussion crisis and the #TakeaKnee crisis.

At the team level, more stakeholders responded they experienced schadenfreude (n = 72) in response to all three repercussions questions, than they felt sympathy (n = 50) and anger (n = 50). The crisis most commonly attributed to the team level was Deflategate.

And at the athlete level, more stakeholders again responded feelings of schadenfreude (n = 263) in response to all three repercussions than they felt anger (n = 130) or sympathy (n = 111). The #TakeaKnee crisis was overwhelmingly attributed to the athlete level. Therefore, stakeholders' felt more joy than anger or sympathy for the repercussions faced for this crisis.

Next, schadenfreude as an emotional response to sport-related crises is explored for associations with stakeholders' perceptions. Crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes are explored and the findings are reported for each level of crisis attribution.

Associations among schadenfreude and stakeholders' perceptions. In this final examination of fan behavior-related crisis emotion, and to test H3, the associations between schadenfreude and crisis perceptions, and schadenfreude and reputational outcomes, are assessed. The correlation matrices include all three emotional responses to aid in additionally

addressing $RQ3_c$, which asked what differences exist among the three emotional responses to crises.

To address H3, each emotion's composite index was recoded to a range of 1-3, which simply excluded the dummy-coded zeros and "no emotion" responses from the original variable transformations. This allowed each variable to become more normally distributed (i.e. less skewed to zero) and to better reflect the three emotions, specifically. The recoded variables were thus a better measurement statistically for the correlation matrices necessary to test H3 (see Table 4.14).

H3 posited that schadenfreude would associate with negative crisis perceptions. H3 was supported across all three of the crisis attribution levels for crisis perceptions. Findings indicate that schadenfreude was significantly positively related to crisis perceptions at the league (r = .257, $p < .01$), team (r = .395, $p < .01$), and athlete (r = .275, $p < .01$) levels. Noticeably, the other two emotions did not correlate with sport-related crisis perceptions.

Table 4.14. *Emotional Responses to Crisis Repercussions*

		Crisis Perceptions			**Reputational Outcomes**		
	Attribution Level	League	Team	Athlete	League	Team	Athlete
Sympathy	League	-0.028			-0.008		
	Team		-0.04			-0.115	
	Athlete			-0.101			**-.255****
Anger	League	-0.012			0.131		
	Team		-0.246			-0.06	
	Athlete			-0.092			-0.153
Schadenfreude	League	**.257****			0.111		
	Team		**.395****			0.192	
	Athlete			**.275****			**.342****

** = $p < .01$

H3 additionally posited that schadenfreude would associate with negative reputational outcomes but H3 was only partially supported. Findings indicate that schadenfreude was significantly positively correlated with reputational outcomes only at the athlete level (r = .342, p

< .01). Schadenfreude was not at all associated with negative reputational outcomes at the league or team levels.

Also noted in the correlation matrix is the absence of significance for the other crisis emotions across stakeholders' perceptions, with the exception of the negative correlation between sympathy and crisis perceptions for athlete-level attributed crises. These results further support this dissertation's iterative findings that stakeholders' perceptions in response to sport-related crises are similar to the perceptions, identification, and fan-to-rival behaviors exhibited in general sport rivalry.

Because emotion in the SCCT model is an outcome of crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, no regression analyses for the predictive nature of schadenfreude in relation to crisis perceptions or reputational outcomes were conducted at this point.

Addressing RQ3a-c and H3. $RQ3_{a\text{-}c}$ and H3 explored the associative relationships among CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude with sport identification, stakeholders' perceptions, and emotional response to sport-related crises. All three of the fan behaviors were positively associated with sport identification. Schadenfreude's significant association with team identification further resulted in increased, additional associations with crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. Schadenfreude also showed additional promise in crisis-related emotional responses. Moreover, CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude all remained true to their respective theoretical underpinnings in analysis of their associative relationships with sport identification and stakeholders' perceptions. These results therefore provide a strong foundation for the egocentric discussion networks that measure the actual activation of these behaviors in response to crises.

This concludes the traditional social science results portion of this dissertation where RQ1-3 and H1-3 were addressed. Following is a synopsis of this section's findings and a look forward to the egocentric discussion networks that further these investigations.

Conclusion of Section 1: Traditional Social Science Findings

This half of this dissertation's research investigated NFL stakeholders' perceptions related to four crises. Stakeholders rated their crisis perceptions and their perceptions of reputational outcomes across three levels of attributed responsibility. To review, crisis attribution at the league and athlete levels were more often selected than the team level and overall crisis perceptions were more negative than positive, especially at the athlete level. Reputational outcomes were more negative at the league and team levels than the athlete level, which rested closest to the median point. So, what accounts for these differences? Well, sport identification held associations and predictive power at the team and league levels for crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes relatively consistently, albeit in the opposite direction originally hypothesized in this dissertation. Moreover, the fan-to-rival fan behaviors—namely schadenfreude—appeared to be the most associated with stakeholders' perceptions at this point. The combination results of sport identification and fan behaviors in relation to sport-related crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes are encouraging when considering the next section of this research where the actual activations take place. Moreover, schadenfreude as an emotional response to crisis repercussions additionally supports this research's main thesis that sport-related crises are perceived similarly to general sport rivalry.

The egocentric discussion networks should enable additional insight, into these variables by exploring the actual activation of these associative perceptions, identification, and behaviors.

Provided next are the results from those exploration within the egocentric discussion network analyses.

Section 2: Egocentric Discussion Network Results

This second findings section is focused on the egocentric discussion network analyses to address $RQ4_{a-c}$, $RQ5_{a-c}$, $H4_{a-b}$, and H5-6. This section will review the composition of the three discussion networks to answer $RQ4_{a-c}$, before shifting focus to the sport-specific composition of the sport and sport crisis discussion networks to answer $RQ5_{a}$. Multilevel models are examined to answer $RQ5_{b}$, $H4_{a-b}$ and H5-6, which focus on ties activated by sport identification in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks. Finally, $RQ5_{c}$ is answered by examining the influence of the sport crisis egocentric discussion network on stakeholders' perceptions. This section concludes with an overview of all research findings for this dissertation.

This second section of this chapter is divided into three analytic subsections. The three subsections include the (1) selection, (2) activation, and (3) influence of the ego networks. The first addresses the composition of the three egocentric discussion networks by describing the attribute, relational, and tie descriptive statistics and the differences and associations among them within the three networks. This descriptive subsection reveals the *selection* of alters. The second subsection utilizes multilevel modeling to analyze the *activation* of network ties, and the third reports the *influence* of the sport crisis discussion network on stakeholders' perceptions through traditional regression analyses.

Separating the egocentric network analyses from the traditional social science analyses were necessary because of the required data handling for egocentric network data. For a detailed explanation on how the egocentric network data were handled see the "Data Preparation for Analyses" section in Chapter 3. In short, all egocentric network data were situated as specified

by Halgin and Borgatti (2012), and Perry, Pescosolido, and Borgatti (2018). The data were cleaned and reformatted into four files for analysis: the important matters discussion network, the sport discussion network, the sport crisis discussion network, and a long-form nested dataset that included all ego and alter variables. To begin, the following subsection presents the composition of the egocentric networks.

Selection: Composition of the Discussion Networks

This first subsection addresses $RQ4_{a\text{-}c}$ and $RQ5_{a}$ regarding the composition of the discussion networks. To address these research questions, reported in this section are each discussion network's demographics, which include all attribute, relational, and tie composition data the egos reported about their respective alters. The important matters discussion network is presented first. Then the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network are presented to address $RQ4_{a\text{-}b}$. This section then responds to $RQ4_{c}$, which requested an overview of the comparative differences between the three discussion networks. Differences, likelihoods, and associations are reported using odds ratios, chi-square tests, and Pearson's correlations where appropriate. This subsection on selection begins with the composition of the important matters discussion network.

Important matters discussion network. The important matters discussion network was the largest of the three discussion networks with 1,106 egos reporting 5,116 alters; with an average of 4.63 alters. The average age of alters in the important matters discussion network was 44 years. More female (n = 2,731) alters were listed in this network than male alters (n = 2,363). Female egos were more likely to list female alters, and males were more likely to list male alters X^2 (1, 5071) = 133.63, $p < .001$).

Ethnicity was the most homogeneous of all demographic measures in this research. In the important matters discussion network, the majority (77%; *n* = 3,849) of alters were Caucasian, just like the egos. African American alters were the second most frequently listed (*n* = 632) yet made up only 12% of the total ethnic mix. Political ideology and partisanship also were measured. Overall, egos and their alters were more moderate (*n* = 2,077) than liberal (*n* = 1,383) or conservative (*n* = 1,626) in political ideology. Egos reached to more Democrats (*n* = 1,810) than Independents (*n* = 1,653) or Republicans (*n* = 1,624).

Table 4.15. *Alter Demographics in Important Matters Discussion Network*

n = 5,116		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Age		5073	44.07	18.75

		N	*%*
Gender	Female	2731	54
	Male	2363	46
Ethnicity	Caucasian	3849	77
	African American	632	12
	Hispanic | Latino	280	5
	Asian	117	2
	Other	214	4
Ideology	Liberal	1383	27
	Moderate	2077	41
	Conservative	1626	32
Partisanship	Democrat	1810	36
	Independent/Unaffiliated	1653	32
	Republican	1624	32
Relationship Role	Family	2875	56
	Close Friends	1730	34
	Proximal	141	3
	Online Friend	20	
	Acquaintance	127	3
	Multiplex	223	4

Egos in the important matters discussion network reported communicating about important matters more with kin (*n* = 2,875) than with close friends (*n* = 1,730). Those who

served a multiplex (n = 223) role in the ego's life were listed third most frequently, followed by proximal (n = 141) alters (e.g. coworkers and neighbors), acquaintances (n = 127), and online friends (n = 20). The strength of relational ties (measured along a 1–7 scale) among egos and their alters revealed frequent communication (M = 5.73), close relationships (M = 5.95), and egos having known their important matters discussants for an average of 22 years.

Table 4.16. *Relational Ties of Alters in Important Matters Discussion Network*

	N	*M*	*SD*
Communication Frequency	5087	5.73	1.45
Relationship Closeness	5093	5.95	1.53
Time Known	5095	22.41	17.27

Sport discussion network. The sport matters discussion network featured 89% of the important matters ego (n = 987) who reported 3,848 alters, with an average of 3.90 alters. The average age of alters in the sport discussion network was 44 years. Males (72.8%; n = 2,563) were more than twice as likely (OR = 2.35, $p < .001$) to be listed as sport discussants than females (27.2%; n = 957) in the sport discussion network X^2 (1, 3497) = 71.26, $p < .001$.

Again, ethnic diversity was not present because again the majority of the sport discussion network's alters were Caucasian (77.4%; n = 2,708). Political ideology was mostly moderate (41.8%) among alters in the sport discussion network, and political partisanship was equally distributed between Democrat (34%) and Republican (34%) alters.

Table 4.17. *Demographics of Alters in Sport Discussion Network*

n = 3,848		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Age		2093	44.10	17.57
		N	%	
Gender	Female	957	27.2	
	Male	2563	72.8	
Ethnicity	Caucasian	2708	77.4	
	African American	421	12	
	Hispanic | Latino	193	5.5	
	Asian	55	1.6	
	Other	120	3.5	
Ideology	Liberal	877	25	
	Moderate	1464	41.8	
	Conservative	1163	33.2	
Partisanship	Democrat	1199	34.2	
	Independent/Unaffiliated	1116	31.8	
	Republican	1192	34	
Relationship Role	Family	1659	43.1	
	Close Friends	1368	35.6	
	Proximal	177	4.6	
	Online Friend	51	1.3	
	Acquaintance	92	2.4	
	Multiplex	501	13	

Egos in the sport discussion network reported nearly as many close friends (*n* = 1,368) as kin (*n* = 1,659). Those who served a multiplex (*n* = 501) role in the ego's life were listed third most frequently, followed by proximal (*n* = 177) alters (e.g. coworkers and neighbors), acquaintances (*n* = 92), and online-only friends (*n* = 51). Relational ties among alters in the sport discussion network were relatively strong: frequency of communication (*M* = 5.20), relationship closeness (*M* = 5.39), and time known (*M* = 20.34 years).

Table 4.18. *Relational Ties of Alters in Sport Discussion Network*

	N	*M*	*SD*
Communication Frequency	3797	5.20	1.86
Relationship Closeness	3790	5.39	1.82
Time Known	3438	20.34	16.22

This section addressed $RQ4_a$ by reporting the sport discussion network composition. Next, $RQ4_b$ is addressed by reporting the composition of the sport crisis discussion network.

Sport crisis discussion network. The sport crisis matters discussion network included 76% of all egos (n = 840) reporting 2,494 alters, with an average of 2.97 alters. The average age of alters in the sport crisis discussion network was 45 years. Males (69.9%; n = 1,480) were significantly more likely than females (30.1%; n = 637) to be listed as sport crisis discussion network discussants (OR = 1.88, $p < .001$), X^2 (1, n = 2,108) = 44.06, $p < .001$. Ethnicity selection was not diverse, with mostly Caucasian egos reporting Caucasian alters (79.4%; n = 1,689). Political ideology was mostly moderate (40%), and the sport crisis discussion network featured more Republican (n = 819) alters than Democrats (n = 681) or Independents (n = 626).

Table 4.19. *Demographics of Alters in Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

n = 2,494		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Age		2093	45.53	17.24
		N	%	
Gender	Female	637	30.1	
	Male	1480	69.9	
Ethnicity	Caucasian	1689	79.4	
	African American	223	10.5	
	Hispanic | Latino	100	4.7	
	Asian	30	1.4	
	Other	84	1.7	
Ideology	Liberal	502	23.7	
	Moderate	847	40.1	
	Conservative	765	36.2	
Partisanship	Democrat	681	32	
	Independent/Unaffiliated	626	29.4	
	Republican	819	38.5	
Relationship Role	Family	1048	42	
	Close Friends	750	30.1	
	Proximal	93	3.7	
	Online Friend	35	1.4	
	Acquaintance	80	3.2	
	Multiplex	488	19.6	

The relational demographics revealed that egos in the sport crisis discussion network reported more kin (n = 1,048) than close friends (n = 750), and a close third were those who served a multiplex (n = 488) role in the ego's life. Proximal (n = 93) alters, acquaintances (n = 80), and online-only friends (n = 35), followed. The strength of ties with these alters were strong: frequency of communication (M = 5.46), relationship closeness (M = 5.60), and time known (M = 21.48 years).

Table 4.20. *Relational Ties of Alters in Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	N	*M*	*SD*
Communication Frequency	2130	5.46	1.85
Relationship Closeness	2134	5.60	1.81
Time Known	2100	21.48	17.17

Addressing RQ4a-b. To this point the *selection* of alters by egos has been presented for each of the three functionally specific discussion networks. $RQ4_{a\text{-}b}$, which asked the compositional makeup of the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network, has also been addressed with demographic information related to attribute, relational, and tie network composition. In sum, middle-aged white males were most likely to discuss sport and sport crises. Middle-aged white females and middle-aged white males were most likely to discuss sport and sport crises with middle-aged white males. Political ideology leanings were mostly moderate in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, and selection of a preferred partisanship for discussants were not at all present in the sport discussion network but selection of more Republican discussants occurred in the sport crisis discussion network. Both the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network were made up of a diverse mix of family and close friends, but the sport crisis discussion network included a larger number of multiplex discussants (i.e. spouses who were also listed as friends and friends who were also

listed as coworkers). The sport crisis discussion network additionally showed closer relational ties between egos and their alters than the sport discussion network.

To address $RQ4_c$, which asked how the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network differed in composition from the important matters discussion network, a series of comparative analyses were conducted. The attribute, relational, and tie compositions of the three discussion networks were compared. For example, the networks were similar in age and ethnicity composition. The average age of alters in the important matters discussion network and sport discussion network was 44, and average age was 45 for the sport crisis discussion network. Age of egos compared to the age of their alters moderately significantly correlated across all three networks: important matters discussion network ($r = .485$, $p < .01$), sport discussion network ($r = .498$, $p < .01$), and a slightly stronger correlation existed for the sport crisis discussion network ($r = .526$, $p < .01$).

Ethnicity was the most homogeneous of all demographic measures across all three networks because the majority of egos and their alters were Caucasian. African American egos (11%; $n = 1{,}270$) and alters (11%: $n = 1{,}276$) were the second most frequently occurring ethnicity in each of the discussion networks and the alters made up 12% of the remaining ethnicity in the important matters discussion network and the sport discussion network, but only 10.5% in the sport crisis discussion network.

Homophily is analyzed within ego networks by a measurement called the E-I index, which ranges from +1 to -1. The E-I index assesses the ratio of ties to external groups (E = +1) and the ratio of ties to internal groups (I = -1). Halgin and Borgatti (2012) applied the analogy of ethnicity to explain the premise of the E-I index. A Caucasian ego who selects alters of several different ethnicities is reaching to external groups outside of the ego's own ethnicity and this ego

will have an E-I index closer to +1, which reflects a more heterogeneous network. A Caucasian ego who selects only Caucasian alters will have an E-I index closer to -1, which reflects a more homogeneous network. Ethnicity in the important matters discussion network was the most homogeneous of all categorical variables across the three discussion networks (see Table 4.21).

Table 4.21. *Homophily Measurements for the Egocentric Discussion Networks*

E-I Index

	IM	SP	SC
Gender	-0.145	-0.194	-0.187
Ethnicity	-0.702	-0.663	-0.684
Ideology	-0.214	-0.180	-0.202
Partisanship	-0.255	-0.198	-0.218

In contrast, gender in the important matters discussion network was the least homogeneous among the categorical variables because females and males were both listed in the important matters discussion network, compared to mostly males being listed in both of the sport-related discussion networks. The E-I index is not significantly different however because male egos were more likely than female egos to list sport (male = 60%, female = 40%) and sport crisis (male = 58%, female = 42%) discussants, males were nearly twice as likely as females to be listed as those discussants (OR [odds ratio] = 1.91, $p < .001$), even though females reported as many female alters as male alters, yet males reported twice as many male alters as female alters $X^2 = 260.78$, $p < .001$.

The sport discussion network had the lowest E-I index for both political measurements. The important matters discussion network and sport crisis discussion network were opposite from each other concerning political partisanship among alter selection. Egos in the important matters discussion network reported more Democrats as discussants but egos in the sport crisis discussion network reported more Republicans as discussants. The sport discussion network's

egos showed virtually no selection of one partisanship over the other. All three discussion networks were relatively similar across political ideology with all three reporting an average of 41% of the alters as moderate in their beliefs.

Relationship role composition differed slightly between the important matters discussion network and the sport and sport crisis discussion networks. Family were more likely to be listed in the important matters discussion network (OR = 1.73, $p < .001$), but friends (OR = 1.14, $p < .001$), proximal (OR = 1.52, $p < .001$), and online friends (OR = 1.85, $p < .001$) were most likely to be listed in the sport discussion network. Alters who serve a multiplex of relationships to egos were those most likely to be listed in the sport crisis discussion network (OR = 2.74, $p < .001$). Proximal alters ($r = -.040$, $p < .01$) and online friends ($r = -.050$, $p < .01$) listed as alters were negatively associated with being discussants in the important matters discussion network, yet both were positively associated with being listed as discussants in the sport discussion network ($r = .039$, $p < .01$; $r = .030$, $p < .01$, respectively). An interesting aside here concerning the sport discussion network is that these results reveal that sport discussions involve a friendly, proximal exchange, yet there was no significant likelihood for acquaintances to be listed as sport discussants. This means that some level of a meaningful relational component exists when selecting others to discuss sport. The increased frequency of multiplex role discussants within the sport crisis discussion network discussants signifies that egos select those they hold more complex relationships with to discuss sport crises (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010).

Network cohesiveness further substantiates these overall network comparison findings. Network cohesiveness was analyzed by a structural holes measurement based upon frequency of communication and alter cohesiveness for each of the three networks. Only network density is reported here for comparison purposes concerning each discussion network, but for a detailed

report on the structural holes analyses and findings for communication frequency and for talking about sport, please refer to Appendix E, Table 5.2, and Table 5.3. The average density within the important matters discussion network was 59%. This means that the important matters network featured a more closed than open network because on average, 59% of an ego's alters all knew each other. The sport discussion network density was 45%, which indicates egos had a less cohesive network than they indicated for the important matters discussion network. The sport crisis discussion network's density was 40%, which indicated the least dense structure among the three networks. Density is a structural measure that relates to the ability of egos to activate functional ties with alters. This measurement of network cohesiveness aids in indicating whether an ego's network is sending and receiving redundant or unique—and therefore possibly influential—information. For example, a closed personal network where density is higher and more alters know each other (such as in the important matters network) equates the sharing of mostly redundant information with alters who hold the same views as the ego. This results in more communication flow because of its ability to be uninhibited but this also results in less access to new ideas. In the sport crisis discussion network, however, egos possessed more access to unique sources of information because fewer alters were interrelated.

Relatedly, egos reported that they communicated about truly important matters more frequently with those they feel closest to and have known the longest. Frequency of communication and relationship closeness were highly positively correlated across all three discussion networks ($r = .708$, $p < .01$), but differences existed between the networks for the strength of those relational ties, however. For example, frequency of communication within all three discussion networks ($n = 11{,}014$, $M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.70$) reflected moderately strong communication ties. Egos reported higher levels of frequency of communication with those in

their important matters discussion network (M = 5.73) than those in their sport discussion network (M = 5.20) or sport crisis discussion network (M = 5.46). Overall, relationship closeness (n = 11,017, M = 5.69, SD = 1.71) across the three discussion networks was also moderately high, and again, relationship closeness was strongest in important matters discussion network (M = 5.95) compared to the sport discussion network (M = 5.39) and the sport crisis discussion network (M = 5.60) was again situated in the middle of the two. The overall amount of time known (n = 10,633, M = 21.56, SD = 16.94) was over 20 years. Egos reported knowing their important matters discussion network discussants (M = 22.41) longer than their sport discussion network (M = 20.34) and sport crisis discussion network (M = 21.48) discussants. Egos reported knowing their sport crisis discussion network discussants significantly longer than their sport discussion network discussants (X^2 = 18.87, $p < .001$).

Addressing RQ4c. In sum, $RQ4_c$ can best be answered by the homophily and cohesiveness differences displayed between the important matters discussion network compared to the sport discussion network. In contrast, the sport discussion network, while still homogeneous, shows more promise in the openness of egos to a wider variety of communication sources than important matters. The sport crisis discussion network was sandwiched between the important matters discussion network and the sport discussion network in nearly every attribute, relational, and tie composition measurement and featured the highest likelihood for accessing unique information. This partially insinuates that discussions concerning sport crises were more intimately exchanged than discussions concerning general sport yet not quite as intimate as important matters.

This research to this point has revealed who the selected discussants were for functionally specific topics. It is now time to move forward with a specific focus on the sport-related

measurements, therefore, it is at this point that the important matters discussion network will drop out from further results reporting. The important matters discussion network was critical for assessment of the initial attribute, relational, and tie composition and for assistance in explaining how or in what ways the network composition and structure of the sport-related networks might differ, especially because of the pioneering nature of this research. Now that those likenesses, differences, and emerging considerations between and within the three discussion networks have been identified, the focus can shift to the purpose of this dissertation, which were the sport specific discussions. Next, $RQ5_a$ is addressed.

The function and strength of sport communication ties. The function and strength of ties are important measurements in egocentric network analyses because such ties demonstrate the connections in relationships. $RQ5_a$ is addressed here by examining the reported sport-specific communication ties between the egos and their alters. The same three fan behaviors measured in the traditional social science section of this dissertation are again measured here—CORFing, blasting and schadenfreude—but they were operationalized as sport communication relational ties from a network perspective. This is because the communicated fan behaviors are relational between an ego and his/her alters much in the same manner as other ties, such as communication frequency, because each fan behavior is selected and activated in differing degrees with functionally specific alters in each of the ego's networks. The strength and function of those activations are of great interest to this research to examine whether the conceptual psychological measurements of the three fan behaviors are indeed resulting in actual communicated behaviors, especially in response to sport crises.

Please recall that each fan behavior was measured along a seven-point scale (offering the same variance in tie strength as the other relational ties) from not at all likely to very likely to

engage in the behavior. Each of the three fan behaviors were measured in three ways: (1) the traditional measurement in response to game outcomes, (2) as a communicated behavior in response to game outcomes, and (3) as a communicated behavior in response to the sport-related crisis into which each ego had self-selected. A deeper explanation of these measurements is offered here using *blasting* as an example. First, the ego was asked how likely s/he would be to "trash talk" others if the ego's favorite team won a game. In the sport discussion network, egos were asked their likelihood to "trash talk" to each listed alter following a win by the ego's favorite team. Then, in the sport crisis discussion network, the egos were asked how likely they were to "trash talk" each listed alter concerning the crisis into which they had self-selected. This formula was followed for all three fan behaviors—CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude.

To address $RQ5_a$, which asked how fan behaviors are communicated within the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, a review of the traditional psychological measurements of fan behaviors that egos reported in response to traditional sport outcomes were assessed for associations with those fan behaviors reportedly communicated in the two discussion networks. In other words, simple correlations were conducted to investigate the strength of each fan behavior's psychological measurements and its correlation with the actual communicated behavior with alters in the two discussion networks. These correlation results are reported with the descriptive statistics for each fan behavior in this subsection still focused on selection (see Table 4.22 for descriptive statistics for the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network).

Table 4.22. *Fan Behavior Descriptive Statistics for Egos and Alters in the Sport Discussion Network and the Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

		Sport			**Sport Crisis**		
		N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Fan^	Ego	3816	5.15	1.80	2458	5.13	1.84
	Alters	3832	5.70	1.58	2164	5.56	1.69
Seek Out	Ego (after win)	3498	5.12	1.87	2269	5.21	1.89
	Ego (after loss)	3498	4.01	1.99	2269	4.09	1.99
	Alters	3800	4.46	2.11	2452	4.38	2.08
CORFing Avoid	Ego (after win)	3498	2.55	1.87	2269	2.48	1.83
	Ego (after loss)	3498	3.40	2.07	2269	3.35	2.04
	Alters	3811	4.20	2.13	2453	2.80	2.10
Blasting	Ego	3496	3.25	2.15	2269	3.10	2.16
	Alters	3788	3.10	2.30	2448	2.51	2.15
Blasted	Ego	3496	2.81	1.93	2269	2.72	1.94
	Alters	3813	3.12	2.31	2457	2.58	2.18
Schadenfreude	Ego Comm Joy	3504	4.40	2.06	2270	4.42	2.07
	Ego Comm Pride	3504	4.23	2.04	2270	4.18	2.05
	Ego Insult	3503	2.85	2.13	2266	2.73	2.09
Ego Schadenfreude Scale		3503	4.48	1.58	2266	4.46	1.55
	Alters Comm Joy	3776	3.50	2.33	2453	3.02	2.30
	Alters Comm Pride	3803	3.42	2.34	2458	2.80	2.23
	Alters Insult	3823	2.21	1.98	2464	1.97	1.90
Alter Schadenfreude Scale		3752	3.03	1.92	2434	2.60	1.82

^Fan = one question simple fan scale (End et al., 2003)

CORFing. CORFing was measured as the likelihood to seek out alters to discuss news and highlights concerning game outcomes or crisis, and as the likelihood to avoid discussing news and highlights in response to game outcomes or crises. In the sport discussion network, egos were asked how likely they were to engage in discussions concerning game news and highlights with each listed alter following a win by the ego's favorite NFL team (M = 4.46), and following a loss by the ego's favorite NFL team (M = 4.20). These reported behavioral ties with alters were compared to the prior psychological likelihood measure that was captured in the traditional social science portion of this dissertation. The two were assessed for associations to examine whether the psychological and behavioral reporting correlated. The communicated tie of

CORFing as an approach tendency in the sport discussion network (see Table 4.23) was significantly correlated ($r = .320$, $p < .01$) with the psychological measure. The CORFing behavior for regressive communication tendencies was only slightly significantly correlated ($r = .172$, $p < .01$), however.

In the sport crisis discussion network (see Table 4.25), egos were asked how likely they were to seek out or engage in discussions with each alter concerning news or updates about the crisis into which the ego had self-selected ($M = 4.38$), and how likely egos were to avoid such discussions ($M = 2.80$). Both measures of CORFing slightly significantly correlated with the prior psychological measures: CORFing as an approach tendency ($r = .279$, $p < .01$) and as a regressive communication tendency ($r = .284$, $p < .01$).

Blasting. Blasting was measured in the sport discussion network by asking each ego how likely s/he was to "trash talk" each alter ($M = 3.10$) and how likely each alter was to "trash talk" the ego ($M = 3.12$) in response to game wins and loses. The presence of egos blasting their alters in the sport discussion network were strongly ($r = .573$, $p < .01$) correlated with the reported propensity to blast, as measured in the traditional social science section.

Table 4.23. *Sport Discussion Network Correlations of Perceived and Activated Fan Behaviors*

	Perception				
Communicated	CORF Seek	CORF Avoid	Blasting	Blasted	^Schadenfreude
CORF Seek	**.320****	.132**	.262**	.259**	.337**
CORF Avoid	.312**	**.172****	.302**	.306**	.370**
Blasting	.243**	.246**	**.573****	.527**	.531**
Blasted	.201**	.249**	.495**	**.480****	.457**
Schadenfreude	.259**	.312**	.558**	.556**	**.595****

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

"W" = after a win; "L" = after a loss

^Schadenfreude rescaled from 5-item in general sports fan behaviors to match 3-item measures captured in discussion networks.

In the sport crisis discussion network, the same questions were asked but the questions were focused on the crises. Egos reported relatively weak behaviors of blasting others (M = 2.51) and being blasted (M = 2.58) over the crisis into which they had self-selected. The presence of egos blasting their alters in the sport crisis discussion network was moderately significantly correlated (r = .418, p < .01) with the earlier psychological likelihood measurements related to game outcomes that were asked earlier in the traditional social science section.

Schadenfreude. Schadenfreude was measured as a three-item scale asking likelihood to express joy, express pride, and personally insult alters (see Table 4.24). The presence of schadenfreude concerning game outcomes (M = 3.03) was below the median measurement in the sport discussion network.

Table 4.24. *Schadenfreude Scale for Both Discussion Networks (alters only)*

		N	*M*	*SD*	FA | Cronbach's alpha
Schadenfreude		6188	2.86	1.89	64%*** | *a* = .82
	Comm Joy	6231	3.31	2.33	0.93
	Comm Pride	6263	3.18	2.32	0.85
	Insult	6289	2.12	1.95	0.57

***p<.001

The schadenfreude behavior reported in the egocentric networks was also compared to the psychological likelihood measures reported in the traditional social science section of this dissertation. The prior measure was reduced from five items and scaled to the same three items used in the egocentric portion of this research. Schadenfreude as a communicated behavior in the sport discussion network correlated significantly and strongly (r = .595, p < .01) with the prior psychological likelihood measure. The presence of schadenfreude as a communicated tie in the sport crisis discussion network concerning the crisis into which the ego had self-selected was

weak (M = 2.60) but also moderately significantly correlated (r = .442, p < .01) with the prior psychological likelihood measure.

Table 4.25. *Sport Crisis Discussion Network Correlations of Perceived and Activated Fan Behaviors*

	Perception				
Communicated	CORF Seek (W)	CORF Avoid (L)	Blast (W)	Blast (L)	^Schadenfreude
CORF Seek	**.279****	.206**	.230**	.196**	.244**
CORF Avoid	.126**	**.284****	.214**	.262**	.243**
Blast (W)	.139**	.258**	**.418****	.404**	.421**
Blast (L)	.142**	.280**	.416**	**.377****	.390**
Schadenfreude	.238**	.314**	.420**	.467**	**.442****

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
"W" = after a win; "L" = after a loss.
^Schadenfreude rescaled from 5-item in general sports fan behaviors to match 3-item measures captured in discussion networks.

Addressing RQ5a. Fan behaviors were indeed present in both discussion networks, and in response to $RQ5_a$, they were similar in strength and in correlations with the prior psychological measures. Egos engaged in more fan-to-rival communication behaviors (e.g. blasting and schadenfreude) than they were disconnecting themselves from their teams during challenging times of either game losses or crises. Now that we know these ties exist, the activation of the ties can be tested to assess the antecedents related to that activation within each respective network. The second subsection on *activation* includes such analyses.

Now that *selection* within the egocentric networks has been reviewed, *activation* of those selections can be analyzed, and then ultimately, the *influence* on stakeholders' perceptions can be examined. The following second subsection of this egocentric network findings section addresses $RQ5_b$ and H4-6 by analyzing the activated ties in the two sport-related discussion networks using the attribute, relational, and tie demographics and egos' sport identification.

Activation: Relational Ties in the Sport-Related Discussion Networks

The first subsection presented the attribute, relational, and tie demographic composition for a full view of the selection of alters to meet the specific communication needs of the egos. This second subsection will now analyze the sport-specific variables for activation within the sport and sport crisis discussion networks to address $RQ5_b$ and H4-6. To explain, the comparative attribute information of the ego and their listed alters (age, gender, ethnicity, political ideology, and political partisanship) are examined alongside the relational variables (i.e. kin, close friend, fan or rival), to test to what degree ties between the egos and their alters are activated. The ties assessed will include communication frequency, relationship closeness, time known, fan behaviors, and the sport interrelator (see Appendix D for details on this measurement of ego-alter co-consumption of sport). $H4_{a-b}$ are addressed first.

Functionally specific relational tie activation and sport identification. $H4_{a-b}$ posited that those higher in fandom or fanship have stronger, more active ties to fellow fans than those lower in fandom and fanship, and those higher in fandom or fanship have weaker, less activated ties with rival fans. To address hypotheses $H4_{a-b}$, the sport-specific relational composition of alters from the sport and sport crisis discussion networks are presented. Then, a series of multilevel model regression analyses were conducted with each of the four relational ties as dependent variables: communication frequency, relationship closeness, time known, and the sport interrelator. Each tie was assessed for activation likelihood for fans and for rivals along with fandom and fanship. Fandom and fanship were examined twice each for (1) high levels and (2) low levels of sport identification.

Multilevel models (MLM) were a necessary analytic process for the ego network data for protection of the integrity of the data because of its two-level nature (e.g. egos and their nested

alters). MLM was discussed in the literature review noting its ability to keep intact multi-theoretical research designs (Monge & Contractor, 2003), and in the methods chapter to explain the need for cross-level examination of this dissertation's data (Bush et al., 2017; Halgin & Borgatti, 2012; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; Perry et al., 2018). For a detailed explanation of this analytic process for the forthcoming findings, please review Appendix F. To begin addressing $H4_{a\text{-}b}$, the functionally specific sport relational attributes are reported for the alters in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks.

Relational composition of sport alters. The name generators in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks set out to capture functionally specific alters (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015). This was accomplished by asking egos who they speak with about sport or sport crises, and this research went one layer deeper by asking whether those alters were specifically fans or rivals of the egos' favorite team or of the team experiencing each crisis. Online discussants also were captured for functional specificity. The capture of functionally specific fan and rival discussants was necessary to address $H4_{a\text{-}b}$.

Recall here that the five name generators in the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network asked: (1) with whom do you discuss sport, (or crisis in the sport crisis discussion network), (2) who talks to you about sport, (3) who do you speak to who are fellow fans, (4) who do you talk with who are rival fans, and (5) who do you discuss sport with online? Each name generator went through a filtering cycle in the survey where from one name generator question to the next, any repeated names were selected by the respondent (e.g. the ego) and then those selected as repeated discussants were narrowed to only being listed once. Therefore, each unique individual remained in the survey questionnaire matrices by being listed only once. A majority of discussants listed as fellow and rival fans were also those the ego listed in the first

two name generators asking to whom they talk and who talks to them, and were therefore excluded from the following analyses of solely *unique* fellow and rival fans. This outcome and subsequent analysis was reasoned because of the functional specificity of being uniquely named as a fellow fan discussant or being uniquely named a rival fan discussant and how either might relate to the activation of fan behaviors and ultimately, their influence on stakeholders' perceptions.

Sport discussion network alters. In the sport discussion network (see Table 4.26), those who remained distinct from *you talk to* (60.5%; *n* = 2,318) and *those who talk to you* (8.1%; *n* = 309)—in other words, those functionally specific in sport-related discussions—included near-equal splits among fellow fans (11.5%; *n* = 441), rival fans (9.9%; *n* = 381), and online-only discussants (10%; *n* = 383).

Table 4.26. *Name Generators in Sport Discussion Network*

	N	*%*
Talks to	2318	60.5
Talks to you	309	8.1
Fans	441	11.5
Rivals	381	9.9
Online-only	383	10

Sport crisis discussion network alters. Fans and rivals were uniquely operationalized in the sport crisis discussion network by asking egos if their alters were fans or rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis. In the sport crisis discussion network (see Table 4.27), those who remained distinct from *you talk to* (71.6%; *n* = 1,756) and *those who talk to you* (7%; *n* = 171)—again, those functionally specific in sport crisis discussions—included fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis (6.4%; *n* = 156), rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis (8.9%; *n* = 219), and online-only discussants (6.1%; *n* = 150). Here, egos selected alters who

were rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis the second most often as any functionally specific alters for discussing sport crises.

Table 4.27. *Name Generators in Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	N	*%*
Talks to	1756	71.6
Talks to you	171	7
Fans of crisis team/athlete	156	6.4
Rivals of crisis team/athlete	219	8.9
Online-only	150	6.1

These fan and rival alter categorizations are used next in inferential statistical analyses to answer $H4_{a\text{-}b}$., which posit that egos with higher sport identification will possess more strongly activated ties with fellow fans than with rivals. First, findings for the sport discussion network are presented and then the findings for the sport crisis discussion network are presented.

Tie activation in the sport discussion network. To examine tie activation in the sport discussion network, uniquely listed fellow fans (n = 441) and uniquely listed rival fans (n = 381) were entered as covariates in the MLM analyses along with either split-high or split-low fandom and fanship variables as fixed factors, and each of the four relational ties were the dependent variables (see Table 4.28). Four analyses were conducted, one for each relational tie. All four relational ties were negatively associated with uniquely listed fellow fans and rival fans, but the negative associations were stronger among rival fans. Results indicate that rival fans were known for nearly four fewer years (b = -3.74, p < .001) than other alters. Rival discussants also elicited a one point decrease in the likelihood of communication frequency (b = -1.15, p < .001), a one point decrease in the likelihood of relationship closeness (b = -.99, p < .001), and almost a one point decrease (b = -.89, p < .001) in the likelihood of co-consumption of sport (e.g. the sport interrelator).

Table 4.28. *Sport Discussion Network Tie Activation*

		High		**Low**	
		Parameter Estimate	Sig.	Parameter Estimate	Sig.
Communication Frequency	Fan	-0.78	0.00	-0.78	0.00
	Rival	-1.15	0.00	-1.14	0.00
	Fandom	0.15	0.10	-0.25	0.01
	Fanship	0.44	0.00	-0.23	0.01
Relationship Closeness	Fan	-0.52	0.00	-0.52	0.00
	Rival	-0.99	0.00	-0.99	0.00
	Fandom	0.07	0.45	-0.14	0.10
	Fanship	0.38	0.00	-0.20	0.03
Time Known	Fan	-0.97	0.22	-0.96	0.22
	Rival	-3.74	0.00	-3.74	0.00
	Fandom	-3.30	0.00	3.17	0.00
	Fanship	0.99	0.26	-1.30	0.13
Sport Interrelator	Fan	-0.24	0.02	-0.24	0.02
	Rival	-0.89	0.00	-0.89	0.00
	Fandom	0.83	0.00	-0.81	0.00
	Fanship	0.70	0.00	-0.66	0.00

Higher levels of fandom were significantly less likely to relate to time known (b = -3.30, $p < .001$) and significantly more likely to relate to activation of the sport interrelator (b = .83, $p < .001$). Lower levels of fandom were less likely to activate frequent communication (b = -.25, $p < .001$), more likely to relate to time known (b = 3.17, $p < .001$) and less likely to relate to the activation of the sport interrelator (b = -.81, $p < .001$). Fandom was not significant for relating to relationship closeness.

Higher levels of fanship were more likely to activate frequent communication (b = .44, $p < .001$), relationship closeness (b = .38, $p < .001$) and the sport interrelator (b = .70, $p < .001$) ties when discussing sport. Lower levels of fanship were less likely to activate communication frequency (b = -.23, $p < .01$), relationship closeness (b = -.20, $p < .05$) and the sport interrelator (b = -.66, $p < .001$) ties. Fanship was not significantly likely to relate to amount of time known.

Tie activation in the sport crisis discussion network. In the sport crisis discussion network, egos activated ties with rivals (n = 219) of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis more frequently than they activated ties with fans (n = 156) of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis. This means that egos were more likely to discuss sport crises with people who had a known disconnection to the team or athlete experiencing the crisis (see Table 4.29). Furthermore, fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis were nearly one-and-a-half times (b = -1.37, p < .001) less likely to be listed as a discussant for every one-point increase in frequency of communication. Fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis were almost six times (b = -5.85, p < .001) less likely to be listed as a discussant for every one-year increase in time known. Relationship closeness (b = -1.26, p < .001) and the sport interrelator (b = -.59, p < .001) ties followed along the same trajectory within the sport crisis discussion network. These results for activating ties with fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis hardly differed by level of sport identification.

Fandom and fanship levels differed in other ways, however, especially related to time known and in relation to the co-consumption of sport. For time known, higher levels of fandom were negatively associated but lower levels of fandom were positively associated. In other words, the more an ego socially-identified with sport the fewer years they needed to know someone to speak with them about sport crises. The opposite was true for fanship because higher levels of fanship related to lengthier relationships and lower levels of fanship related to significantly shorter relationships. This supports prior selection findings that sport crises discussions are more intimate than general sport discussions.

Higher levels of fandom were also significantly less likely to relate to time known (b = -3.40, p < .001), but more likely to be related to activation of the sport interrelator (b = .91, p <

.001). High fandom held no significance with the activation of alters with whom egos communicated frequently or were relationally close. The same outcomes for communication frequency and relationship closeness were found for low levels of fandom, but lower levels of fandom were positively related to time known ($b = 3.03$, $p < .01$) and negatively to activating the sport interrelator ($b = -.67$, $p < .001$).

Table 4.29. *Sport Crisis Discussion Network Tie Activation*

		High		**Low**	
		Parameter Estimate	Sig.	Parameter Estimate	Sig.
Communication Frequency	Fan	-1.37	0.00	-1.36	0.00
	Rival	-1.03	0.00	-1.03	0.00
	Fandom	0.09	0.39	-0.20	0.06
	Fanship	0.40	0.00	-0.19	0.09
Relationship Closeness	Fan	-1.26	0.00	-1.25	0.00
	Rival	-0.89	0.00	-0.88	0.00
	Fandom	-0.01	0.92	-0.07	0.49
	Fanship	0.40	0.00	-0.20	0.07
Time Known	Fan	-5.85	0.00	-5.87	0.00
	Rival	-4.18	0.00	-4.22	0.00
	Fandom	-3.40	0.00	3.03	0.01
	Fanship	2.84	0.01	-3.71	0.00
Sport Interrelator	Fan	-0.59	0.00	-0.59	0.00
	Rival	-0.35	0.00	-0.35	0.00
	Fandom	0.91	0.00	-1.04	0.00
	Fanship	0.91	0.00	-0.67	0.00

Higher levels of fanship were significantly more likely to be related to every one of the four ties: communication frequency ($b = .40$, $p < .001$), relationship closeness ($b = .40$, $p < .001$), time known ($b = 2.84$, $p < .001$), and higher levels of fanship was more likely to be related to the activation of the sport interrelator ($b = .91$, $p < .001$). Low fanship held no significance with the activation of alters with whom egos communicated frequently or were relationally close, but low levels of fanship did negatively relate to time known ($b = -3.71$, $p < .001$) and activation of the sport interrelator ($b = -.67$, $p < .001$).

Addressing $H4_{a-b}$. High levels of fanship was a significant positive antecedent for the activation of all four relational ties. In other words, egos who scaled high on fanship were more likely to communicate frequently, be relationally close, known for longer periods of time, and co-consume sport with their sport and sport crisis discussion network alters. Only the sport interrelator was positively likely to be activated by egos who scaled higher in fandom. Still though, and to answer $H4_{a-b}$, tie activation for uniquely listed fans versus rivals did not differ in either discussion network between egos who scaled high and egos who scaled low on the fandom and fanship scales, so $H4_{a-b}$ are not supported.

Still, egos were less likely to communicate frequently, be relationally close, known for a long period of time, or co-consume sport with alters listed as unique fan-specific or unique rival-specific discussants in the sport discussion network. Recall that these alters had survived the filtering process for having been listed in any other name generator or prior discussion network. These findings suggest that uniquely listed fellow fans and rival fans could be peripheral network members. Moreover, the uniquely listed rival fans elicited even weaker ties than fellow fans, although those differences were not activated by sport identification.

In the sport crisis discussion network, uniquely listed fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis consistently demonstrated less likelihood across all four relational tie activations than did uniquely listed rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis. This finding actually mirrors those found in the sport discussion network, and coincides with prior egocentric network studies that indicate egos are most likely to seek out agreeable discussants.

So, we know now that activated ties among egos and their uniquely listed fellow fans and rival alters in the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network are arguably similar. Next, this dissertation delves into the activation of fan behaviors as activated

communication ties and the role of sport identification in that activation. The next section will answer $RQ5_b$ and H5 regarding the activation of fan behaviors, and the role of fandom and fanship in relation to that activation, by conducting another series of MLM analyses.

Sport identification and the activation of fan behaviors. To address $RQ5_b$, the activation of fan behaviors as communication ties between egos and their alters in response to game outcomes and in response to sport crises were analyzed. A series of MLM analyses were conducted to analyze the activation of fan behaviors in the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network, while controlling for all ego and alter attribute, relational, and tie variables (see Tables 4.30 and 4.31 for full results). $RQ5_b$ asked how sport identification associates with fan behavior activation, and H5 posited that higher fandom and fanship levels would result in a increased likelihood of fan behavior activation in the sport crisis discussion network in response to crises.

The three fan behaviors—CORFing, blasting and schadenfreude—were examined. CORFing and blasting were each split into two measurements. CORFing was measured as both seeking out others (as an approach tendency) and as an avoidance tactic. Blasting was measured in two ways as well: as the ego blasting his/her alters and the ego reporting being blasted by his/her alters. The fan behaviors were parsed out for a clearer view of fan behavior activation and the antecedents of those activations in these dichotomized measures. The continuous variables of fandom and fanship were used in these analyses (not the split high or split low variables of fandom and fanship used in the prior MLMs to answer $H4_{a-b}$). Following, the findings for $RQ5_b$ for the sport discussion network are first presented and then the findings for the sport crisis discussion network. Then, H5 is addressed.

Fan behavior activation in the sport discussion network. All fan behaviors were examined in multiple MLM analyses to identify whether or how sport identification increased the likelihood of fan behavior tie activation in response to game outcomes. Five models were analyzed: CORFing seek out, CORFing avoid, the ego blasting alters, the alters blasting ego (as perceived and reported by the ego), and schadenfreude (the three-item scale of communicating pride, communicating joy, and insulting others). Each fan behavior were the dependent variables and each MLM controlled for ego and alter attribute, relational, and tie composition demographics, as well as analyzing sport identification and the unique fan or rival discussants as additional independent variables. To answer $RQ5_b$, the results for fandom are presented first and then the results for fanship follow.

Fandom. Fandom demonstrated a highly significant likelihood in the activation of blasting ($b = .37$, $p < .001$), being blasted ($b = .34$, $p < .001$) and schadenfreude ($b = .32$, $p < .001$). Fandom showed no significance for the activation of either measurement of CORFing, however.

These three fan-to-rival behaviors were most likely to be activated with rival fans. In fact, egos perceived *being blasted* by his/her alters following a loss by the ego's favorite team the most vehemently ($b = .60$, $p < .001$). However, egos seem to be dishing out nearly as much blasting because for every one point increase in the likelihood of an ego outwardly blasting his/her alters following a win by the ego's favorite team, there was a half point increase ($b = .51$, $p < .001$) in that activation being directed toward the ego's listed rival discussants. Schadenfreude was also significantly more likely to be directed at rivals ($b = .32$, $p < .01$), but again the two CORFing fan behaviors were insignificant for activation with rival discussants.

The only significance among the activation of fan behaviors with fellow fans were the unlikelihood of being blasted by fellow fans (b = -.32, p < .05), and the unlikelihood of avoiding fellow fans after a game loss (b = -.29, p < .05). These findings make sense given that fellow fans would be unlikely to want to relive a loss of their mutually-favored team and would not be likely to engage in trash talking fellow fans.

A few other independent variables showed significance among the three fan-to-rival behaviors that were likely to be activated by fandom including the ego being nonwhite among blasting (b = -.142, p < .001) and schadenfreude (b = -.123, p < .001) activation, and Republican alters who blast egos (b = .31, p < .05) and alters perceived as a sports fan (b = .14, p < .01).

Fanship. Fanship proved highly significant for the likelihood of fan behavior activation across the sport discussion network. For example, CORFing as a communicative approach tendency following a game win (b = .27, p < .001), CORFing as a regressive information-sharing tendency after a game loss (b = .33, p < .001), blasting (b = .10, p < .001), and schadenfreude (b = .21, p < .001), were all significantly more likely to be activated by those higher in fanship. The only exception of fan behavior activation by level of fanship was the ego reportedly being blasted by alters.

Blasting and schadenfreude were the only two behaviors that resulted in both fandom and fanship as significant likely antecedents to tie activation. Both blasting and schadenfreude were activated with rival fans and not fellow fans, and both were significantly unlikely to be activated by non-white egos (b = -.14, p < .001 and b = -.12, p < .001, respectively). The only additional significant antecedent was communication frequency (b = .11, p < .01) between egos and alters when blasting was activated.

The two CORFing measures were more likely to be activated among those high in fanship, and both (seeking out and avoiding) were most likely to occur with alters perceived to be sport fans ($b = .31$, $p < .001$; $b = .18$, $p < .001$, respectively), with alters who co-consumed sport with the ego ($b = .33$, $p < .001$; $b = .34$, $p < .001$, respectively), and with alters who the ego frequently communicated ($b = .15$, $p < .001$; $b = .24$, $p < .001$, respectively). The only additional significant likelihood that occurred for the activation of CORFing happened within the seeking out measure where Republican ($b = .39$, $p < .05$) egos sought out alters with which they were relationally close ($b = .14$, $p < .001$).

These results reveal that fandom and fanship are both tie activation antecedents for fan behaviors in offline and online social networks. Fan-to-rival communication not only saturated the sport discussion network but this research has now demonstrated that both the social identification with other fans and an individual's identification with one's favorite team activates that discordant communication between egos and rivals. Also evidenced in these findings were that fellow fan alters served as a safe communicative space because they were not being avoided and they were not blasting the ego. Conversely, when only fanship was the antecedents to activated fan behavior ties, egos and alters demonstrated closer relationships, increased communication, and a co-consumption of sport. These results were stronger among those who seek out certain others to discuss game outcomes and highlights following a game win. The CORF seek out results support the suggested new or additional fan behavior: celebrating our achievements together, or COATing (Jensen et al., 2016). Fanship also resulted in an increased likelihood to engage in schadenfreude (joy at another's adversity) with rival fans.

Table 4.30. *Multilevel Modeling for Fan Behavior Activation in Sport Discussion Network*

	CORF After Win		**CORF After Loss**		**Blasting Others**		**Being Blasted**		**Schadenfreude**	
Estimate of Covariance (*b*)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)
n =	1052		1050		1045		1045		1029	
Ego Attributes										
Age	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Gender	0.02	0.17	0.13	0.19	-0.01	0.27	-0.09	0.27	0.18	0.24
Ethnicity[a]	-0.19	0.21	-0.41	0.23	**-1.42*** **	0.31	-1.04	0.32	**-1.23*** **	0.27
Ideology[a]	-0.25	0.20	-0.08	0.22	-0.39	0.32	-0.43	0.32	-0.34	0.28
Partisanship[a]	**0.39***	0.20	0.30	0.22	0.28	0.32	0.10	0.32	0.34	0.27
Alter Attributes										
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gender	0.11	0.10	0.20	0.11	0.05	0.11	0.07	0.12	0.09	0.08
Ethnicity[a]	-0.03	0.14	0.11	0.15	-0.05	0.16	-0.12	0.17	0.01	0.12
Ideology[a]	0.24	0.12	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.14	0.07	0.15	0.02	0.10
Partisanship[a]	-0.17	0.12	-0.15	0.13	0.22	0.13	**0.31***	0.14	0.13	0.09
Role | Relationship										
Family	0.31	0.41	0.19	0.44	-0.47	0.47	-0.68	0.51	-0.28	0.34
Friends	0.38	0.40	0.20	0.43	-0.40	0.46	-0.68	0.50	-0.21	0.33
Multiplex	0.22	0.44	-0.07	0.47	-0.28	0.50	-0.68	0.54	-0.30	0.36
Proximal	0.63	0.45	0.31	0.48	0.06	0.51	-0.25	0.55	0.03	0.37
Online Friend	-0.53	0.51	-0.23	0.55	-0.17	0.59	-0.51	0.64	-0.25	0.42
Relational Ties										
Comm freq.	**0.15*** **	0.04	**0.24*** **	0.04	**0.11****	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.03
Closeness	**0.14*** **	0.04	0.07	0.04	-0.08	0.05	-0.02	0.05	0.06	0.03
Time known	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
SP interrelator	**0.33*** **	0.04	**0.34*** **	0.05	0.08	0.05	0.10	0.06	0.04	0.04
Sport-specific Attributes of Ego | Alter										
Alter is a fan	**0.31*** **	0.04	**0.18*** **	0.04	0.17	0.04	**0.14****	0.05	0.05	0.03
FANDOM	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.06	**0.37*** **	0.09	**0.34*** **	0.09	**0.32*** **	0.08
FANSHIP	**0.27*** **	0.06	**0.33*** **	0.07	**0.10*** **	0.10	0.12	0.10	**0.21****	0.09
Fellow Fan	0.10	0.14	**-0.29***	0.14	-0.18	0.14	**-0.32***	0.16	-0.12	0.10
Team Rival	-0.24	0.15	0.07	0.15	**0.51*** **	0.15	**0.60*** **	0.17	**0.32****	0.11
BIC	3694.82		3820.48		3971.81		4113.22		3322.96	
Deviance	-11364.85		-11149.08		-10435.51		-10936.33		-8386.39	
ICC (*model sig.)	36%***		40%***		66%***		60%***		75%***	

Model significance: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

ICC = within and between variance calculated. ICC means the % *unexplained* for DV by model components.

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Fan behavior activation in the sport crisis discussion network. Fan behavior activation in response to crisis is a seminal component within this dissertation because this research's underlying argument is that sport identification is an antecedent to fan behavior tie activation in response to sport crises in a similar manner as sport identification is an antecedent to fan behavior tie activation in response to game outcomes. The MLM analyses for the sport crisis discussion network were conducted exactly as they were conducted for the sport discussion network with all five fan behaviors analyzed as dependent variables, controlling for ego and alter

attribute, relational, and tie composition demographics; as well as sport identification, and fan and rival discussants entered as additional independent variables. Again, the results are first presented for fandom's likelihood to activate fan behavior ties and then fanship's likelihood to activate fan behavior ties, both in response to sport crises.

Fandom. In contrast to the findings in the sport discussion network, fandom significantly increased the likelihood of fan behavior activation. The findings here mirror those for fanship in the sport discussion network. This means that social identification resulted in a higher likelihood of seeking out ($b = .17$, $p < .01$) and avoiding ($b = .23$, $p < .01$) alters to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis, as well as demonstrating a higher likelihood in egos blasting alters ($b = .17$, $p < .05$) concerning the crisis, and egos expressing schadenfreude ($b = .20$, $p < .001$) in response to crises. The only exception was alters blasting egos concerning the crisis (*ns*).

Other interesting predictors emerged in the sport crisis discussion network, particularly in the activation of CORFing as an avoidance tendency. Egos were most likely to report avoiding discussions about news and updates concerning the crisis with virtually every relationship role other than online friends. Egos avoided alters who were relationally close ($b = -.09$, $p < .05$) to them, including family ($b = 1.02$, $p < .001$), close friends ($b = 1.08$, $p < .001$), those who serve multiplex roles ($b = .87$, $p < .01$), and even proximal discussants ($b = .87$, $p < .01$), and they avoided those with whom they typically co-consumed sport ($b = .15$, $p < .001$).

The only significant likelihood of activated fan behaviors in the sport crisis discussion network with fans or rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis occurred among egos who were high in fandom and reportedly blasted their alters who were fans ($b = .34$, $p < .01$) of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis. There were no significant likelihood outcomes for fan behavior activation with rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis.

Fanship. Fanship activated several ties including seeking out ($b = .20$, $p < .001$) alters to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis, alters blasting egos ($b = .17$, $p < .05$) concerning the crisis, and egos expressing schadenfreude ($b = .15$, $p < .05$) in response to the crisis. Both fandom ($b = .17$, $p < .01$) and fanship ($b = .20$, $p < .001$) were likely antecedents for seeking out others to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis, as was frequent communication ($b = .21$, $p < .001$) with alters perceived as sport fans ($b = .09$, $p < .001$).

Being blasted was another fanship-activated tie in the sport crisis discussion network. Non-white ($b = -1.00$, $p < .001$) egos were significantly more likely to be blasted by alters who are perceived as sport fans ($b = .09$, $p < .01$), that the ego was not close to relationally ($b = -.11$, $p < .01$), yet were family ($b = .66$, $p < .05$) and friends ($b = .67$, $p < .05$), but most likely to be online friends ($b = 1.12$, $p < .01$). For schadenfreude, virtually every relationship role demonstrated tie activation in response to joy at the adversity that comes with crisis but schadenfreude was the most likely to be activated with proximal ($b = .84$, $p < .001$) alters. Moreover, non-white ($b = -1.33$, $p < .001$), Republican ($b = .45$, $p < .05$) egos were those most likely to activate schadenfreude in response to crisis.

Table 4.31. *Multilevel Modeling for Fan Behavior Activation in Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	CORF Seek Out		**CORF Avoid**		**Blasting Others**		**Being Blasted**		**Schadenfreude**	
Estimate of Covariance (*b*)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)
n =	1029		1032		1028		1030		1023	
Ego Attributes										
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	**-0.01***	0.01
Gender	0.14	0.17	0.02	0.22	0.18	0.22	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.18
Ethnicity[a]	-0.29	0.22	**-0.75***	0.28	**-0.91*****	0.28	**-1.00*****	0.28	**-1.33*****	0.22
Ideology[a]	0.10	0.21	0.02	0.28	0.25	0.28	0.05	0.28	-0.11	0.23
Partisanship[a]	0.22	0.21	0.03	0.28	**0.54***	0.28	0.42	0.28	**0.45***	0.23
Alter Attributes										
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gender	0.10	0.10	-0.07	0.09	0.02	0.09	0.06	0.10	-0.02	0.05
Ethnicity[a]	-0.07	0.14	0.06	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.16	0.14	0.00	0.07
Ideology[a]	-0.07	0.13	0.06	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.18	0.13	-0.04	0.07
Partisanship[a]	0.07	0.13	0.09	0.11	-0.01	0.11	0.03	0.12	-0.02	0.06
Role | Relationship										
Family	0.19	0.32	**1.02*****	0.28	0.32	0.28	**0.66***	0.31	**0.71*****	0.17
Friends	0.35	0.31	**1.08*****	0.28	0.44	0.27	**0.67***	0.30	**0.69*****	0.16
Multiplex	0.09	0.34	**0.87****	0.30	0.45	0.30	0.62	0.33	**0.74*****	0.18
Proximal	0.59	0.37	**0.87****	0.33	0.51	0.33	0.32	0.36	**0.84*****	0.20
Online Friend	0.33	0.43	0.54	0.38	0.35	0.38	**1.12****	0.43	**0.73****	0.22
Relational Ties										
Comm freq.	**0.21*****	0.04	-0.04	0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.04	0.04	0.01	0.02
Closeness	0.07	0.05	**-0.09***	0.04	-0.06	0.04	**-0.11****	0.04	0.04	0.02
Time known	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
SP interrelator	0.22	0.04	**0.15*****	0.04	**0.19*****	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.02
Sport-specific Attributes of Ego | Alter										
Alter is a fan	**0.09*****	0.03	-0.04	0.03	0.00	0.03	**0.09****	0.03	0.03	0.02
FANDOM	**0.17****	0.06	**0.23****	0.07	**0.17***	0.07	0.12	0.07	**0.20*****	0.06
FANSHIP	**0.20*****	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.08	**0.17***	0.08	**0.15***	0.06
Fan	-0.07	0.17	0.21	0.14	**0.34****	0.14	-0.06	0.15	0.04	0.08
Rival	-0.10	0.14	0.13	0.12	0.02	0.12	-0.06	0.13	0.05	0.07
BIC	3720.38		3667.16		3644.36		3802.33		2801.52	
Deviance	-5671.35		-4944.43		-4584.77		-4981.14		-3700.61	
ICC (*model sig.)	57%***		82%***		83%***		79%***		91%***	

Model significance: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$
ICC = within and between variance calculated. ICC means the % *unexplained* for DV by model components.
[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Addressing RQ5b and H5. Taken together, and in response to $RQ5_b$, these results reveal that fan behaviors were indeed activated in response to sport crises, and fan behavior activation in response to sport crises were most likely to occur with those closest in relationship and proximity. Furthermore, fandom and fanship were both significant likely antecedents for fan behavior activation in response sport crises, which fully supports H5.

The most noticeable differences between the two networks were among the relationship role of the alters and alters being rivals of the egos' favorite team. In the sport discussion

network, it seems egos really did not care too much about who they are activating fan behaviors with, other than those alters being rivals. That couples well with the sprawling significance of individual or team sport identification in that network.

In the sport crisis discussion network, a social awareness emerges. The egos shift focus onto activating fan behaviors within personal relationships and ethnicity and political partisanship of the egos become important contributing factors. These results suggest a flip between the two networks with a focus on self in sport and focus on social consideration in response to sport crises.

Although fanship appeared to be the driving factor in the sport discussion network, egos are clearly employing the characteristics of social comparison in response to sport and sport crises by differentiating between their own in-group versus an alters' out-group by especially derogating the out-group and flexing a superiority muscle over that out-group during a time of adversity (Rees, et al., 2015; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Schadenfreude as an activated crisis response. The final hypothesis, H6, stated that the presence of schadenfreude in response to sport crises would not significantly differ from schadenfreude activated in response to general sport rivalry. This research has revealed that that schadenfreude was indeed activated in both the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network. Both fandom and fanship were significant likely antecedents in both discussion networks and so was ethnicity. What differed between the two were who among alters were most likely to activate schadenfreude. In the sport discussion network it was rivals. In the sport crisis discussion network, there was no discrimination in activating schadenfreude among relational attributes, and neither fans nor rivals of the team affected by the crisis were likely recipients. Cross-level interactions of the attribute, relational, and tie variables for egos and alters

only explained 8% of the variance in activated schadenfreude in response to sport crises, but 25% in response to general sport rivalry. These comparisons of actual schadenfreude activation in the two discussion networks show that schadenfreude is occurring in both discussion networks with few differences between the two. Therefore, H6 is supported although it should be noted that schadenfreude in the sport crisis discussion network may not be as fiercely activated as it is in the sport discussion network.

To conclusively answer $RQ5_{a\text{-}b}$, fan behaviors were present and activated in both the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network and they tracked in similar strength intervals in both sport-related discussion networks. In response to H5, fandom and fanship revealed significant associations among the fan behavior tie activations across both networks, and in response to H6, schadenfreude was activated in a similar manner across both networks, albeit to a lesser strength in response to sport crises. In the sport crisis discussion network specifically, stakeholders responded to sport crises by seeking out agreeable discussants, blasting fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis, and expressing schadenfreude. Fan-to-rival activation is an image management strategy (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980), so it makes sense that fandom—a social identification that is focused toward image management—played a significant role in the activation of those behaviors.

Next, the third and final subsection addresses the last research question presented in this dissertation. $RQ5_c$ explores the influence of egos' discussion networks on stakeholders' perceptions pertaining to sport-related crisis. The remainder of this chapter focuses solely on the sport crisis discussion network, so no further findings are reported for the sport discussion network past this point. The third subsection begins with a review of the analytic approach necessary to analyze network influence.

Influence: Network Influences on Stakeholders' Perceptions

To conclude this findings chapter, the final research question is addressed. $RQ5_c$ asked in which ways the composition of the sport crisis discussion network, combined with sport identification and fan behaviors, might have influenced stakeholders' perceptions, including crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. It is important to note here that when a dependent variable is a measured outcome collected only at level-two, which specifically relate to the ego, MLM analyses are inappropriate. This is true regardless of the level of origin for any of the independent variables (Perry et al., 2018). Therefore, this final research question was addressed by conducting a series of linear regression analyses.

The egos who reported having a sport crisis discussion network (n = 840), were included in these final regression analyses. A refresher on stakeholders' perceptions, the presence of fan behaviors, and sport identification levels in the sport crisis discussion network are briefly offered (see Table 4.32) before presenting the regression analyses findings. Egos reported talking with their sport crisis discussion network alters most about the #TakeaKnee crisis (n = 1546), then CTE (n = 465), Deflategate (n = 321), and the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis (n = 94). Crisis perceptions among the sport crisis discussion network egos were more negative than positive at the league (M = 4.95), team (M = 4.88), and athlete (M = 5.97) levels, and reputational outcomes were still tepid for the league (M = 4.39), team (M = 4.36), and athlete (M = 4.08) levels. The most strongly activated fan behavior in the sport crisis discussion network in response to crises was seeking out others to discuss news and highlights concerning the crisis (M = 4.38). Much weaker activation occurred among CORFing (M = 2.80), schadenfreude (M = 2.60), blasting others (M = 2.58), and being blasted (M = 2.51). The sport interrelator, which measured the amount of ego/alter co-consumption of sport, was near the median measurement

(M = 3.65), and sport identification varied significantly between fandom (M = 3.40) and fanship (M = 4.95).

Table 4.32. *Sport Crisis Discussion Network Stakeholders' Perceptions, Sport Identification, and Fan Behavior Activation*

n = 2,494		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Crisis Perceptions	League	969	4.95	1.40
	Team	291	4.88	1.60
	Athlete	1230	5.97	1.25
Reputational Outcomes	League	971	4.39	1.80
	Team	288	4.36	1.74
	Athlete	1224	4.08	2.07
Fan Behaviors	CORF Seek Out	2452	4.38	2.08
	CORF Avoid	2453	2.80	2.10
	Blasting	2448	2.51	2.15
	Being Blasted	2457	2.58	2.18
	Schadenfreude	2434	2.60	1.82
	Sport Interrelator	1249	3.65	1.73
Sport Identification	Fandom	2483	3.40	1.73
	Fanship	2270	4.95	1.52

The two types of stakeholders' perceptions were each analyzed as dependent variables in these final analyses. First, crisis perceptions were analyzed for the league, team, and athlete levels; and then reputational outcomes were analyzed at the league, team, and athlete levels. Both dependent variables at all three levels were analyzed while controlling for all ego and alter attribute, relational, and tie composition demographics, sport identification, the crisis selected, and fan behaviors. All significant influences for stakeholders' perceptions are reported next (see Tables 4.33-4.34 for results).

Network influencers of crisis perceptions. Overall, the regression analyses show a variety of network influencers for negative crisis perceptions among egos for the three levels of crisis attribution. The significant demographic, relational, and sport-specific predictors are reported.

League level. At the league level, older (β = .24, p < .001) conservative (β = .23, p < .01) egos were most likely to harbor negative crisis perceptions. They frequently communicated (β = .19, p < .05), but with alters they did not know for long periods of time (β = -.12, p < .05). Egos blasting their alters in response to sport crises was also a significant predictor of negative crisis perceptions at the league level (β = .21, p < .01), but neither form of sport identification was significant in this regression model.

Team level. The regression models only indicated significance for fandom (and not fanship) for sport identification as a predictor of negative crisis perceptions at the team level (β = .39, p < .001). Seeking out older (β = .21, p < .01) but not proximal (β = -.32, p < .05) alters to discuss the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis (β = .45, p < .001) were also significant, meaning egos who approached their alters to discuss news and updates (β = .23, p < .05) concerning the crisis were significantly more likely to view the crisis negatively.

Athlete level. Older egos (β = .16, p < .01) discussed sport crisis with white alters (β = .10, p < .05) who they had not known long (β = -.11, p < .05) and with whom they typically did not co-consume sport (β = -.16, p < .01). The regression models indicated significance for fandom (but not fanship) as a predictor for negative crisis perceptions at the athlete level (β = .11, p < .05). CORF seek out was again significant at the athlete level (β = .14, p < .01), meaning egos who approached alters they perceived as a sports fan (β = .13, p < .01) concerning the #TakeaKnee (β = .23, p < .05) crisis to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis were significantly more likely to view the crisis negatively. Alternatively, the CTE (β = -.19, p < .01) and Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault (β = -.20, p < .01) crises were significant negative predictors of negative crisis perceptions at the athlete level.

$RQ5_c$ asked how the composition of the sport crisis discussion network, combined with sport identification and fan behaviors, might have influenced stakeholders' perceptions. For crisis perceptions, each crisis attribution level revealed completely different positive and negative predictive influences. The alter attribute, relational, and tie demographics that influenced perceptions all differed by level, too. The only significant positive alter attributes were age at the team level and ethnicity at the athlete level. The only significant relational variable was proximal discussants at the team level, and the influence was negative, meaning neighbors and coworkers were influential in reducing negative crisis perceptions. Network ties that were influential included communication frequency at the league level, and a negative association with time known at the league and athlete levels. At the league level, these findings indicate that the more often egos communicate with alters the more negative the crisis is perceived, but when egos discuss the crisis with alters they have known longest, the less negatively they perceived the crisis. Also negatively influential was the sport interrelator at the athlete level, so those alters with which egos co-consume sport can be influential in reducing negative crisis perceptions.

Fan behavior activation was influential as well. At the league level, the activation of blasting increased negative crisis perceptions. At the team level and athlete levels, the propensity to seek out alters lowered negative crisis perceptions. Sport identification was only significant for fandom, and only at the team and athlete levels. The higher an ego's fandom, the more negatively crises are perceived. The second half of the answer for $RQ5_c$ continues below with an examination of the influential network factors for stakeholders' perceptions of reputational outcomes.

Table 4.33. *Regression Models for Network Influence for Crisis Perceptions: Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	League	**Team**	**Athlete**
	β	*β*	*β*
n =	363	129	506
Ego Attributes			
Age	**0.24*** **	0.19	**0.16** **
Gender	0.03	-0.10	0.01
Ethnicity[a]	-0.09	-0.20	-0.03
Ideology[a]	**0.23** **	0.01	0.05
Partisanship[a]	-0.01	0.17	0.07
Alter Attributes			
Age	0.02	**0.21** **	0.04
Gender	0.02	0.04	0.01
Ethnicity[a]	-0.08	-0.07	**0.10***
Ideology[a]	0.07	-0.04	0.01
Partisanship[a]	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04
Role | Relationship			
Family	-0.10	-0.69	0.17
Friends	-0.06	-0.86	-0.02
Multiplex	-0.11	-0.39	0.02
Proximal	-0.10	**-0.32***	-0.01
Online Friend	0.05	-0.14	0.09
Relational Ties			
Communication frequency	**0.19***	0.10	0.13
Relationship closeness	0.03	0.11	-0.01
Time known	**-0.12***	-0.03	**-0.11***
Sport Interrelator	0.04	-0.12	**-0.16** **
Sport-specific Attributes of Ego | Alter			
Alter is perceived as fan	0.08	-0.01	**0.13** **
FANDOM	0.06	**0.39*** **	**0.11***
FANSHIP	-0.02	0.01	-0.07
Fan	-0.02	0.01	-0.01
Rival	-0.04	-0.04	0.05
Crisis Selected			
CTE	-0.04	1.07	**-0.19** **
Deflategate	-0.16	1.23	0.04
EE | DA	-0.01	**0.45*** **	**-0.20** **
#TakeaKnee	-0.16	0.78	**0.231***
Activated Fan Behaviors			
CORF Seek	0.02	**0.23***	**0.14** **
CORF Avoid	-0.05	0.15	0.02
Egos Blasting Alters	**0.21** **	0.08	0.03
Alters Blasting Ego	0.01	-0.17	0.04
Schadenfreude	-0.07	-0.14	-0.09
R^2	0.34	0.72	0.34
Adjusted R^2	0.27	0.62	0.30
F for change in R^2	5.07***	7.4***	7.48***

Model significance: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Network influencers of reputational outcomes. The same series of regression analyses were conducted to determine the influential network components for reputational outcomes in response to sport crises. The three models for league, team, and athlete again included the attribute, relational, and tie composition demographics in addition to sport identification, the four crises, and fan behaviors.

League level. At the league level, age of egos (β = .21, p < .01), propensity to blast alters (β = .18, p < .05) and expression of schadenfreude (β = .17, p < .05) were significant positive predictors of negative reputational outcomes related to sport crises. Egos were not necessarily seeking out (β = -.23, p < .001) discussants but they did blast those talked to, and they expressed joy at the league's adversity during those discussions. Egos more freely shared their negative perceptions with alters they knew for less time (β = -.15, p < .05), and those with whom they typically co-consumed sport (β = .37, p < .001). Fanship was a significant negative predictor for reputational outcomes at the league level (β = -.16, p < .01), and this means those high in fanship perceived the league's reputation more favorably in the wake of the crisis, which would have supported an earlier hypothesis ($H1_b$) stated in the traditional social science section of this dissertation.

Team level. The fact that 74% of the variance within reputational outcome perceptions was explained in the team-level reputational outcomes regression model begs attention. This is highly significant for social science. In short, non-white (β = -.27, p < .05) Republican (β = .41, p < .001) egos who highly, socially identify (β = .52, p < .001) with sport (fandom), but were not seeking out others to discuss news and highlights (β = -.29, p < .01) and did not report being blasted by their alters (β = -.30, p < .05), were those who were most likely to negatively review reputational outcomes.

Athlete level. Older ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$) Republican ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$) egos discussed crises with white ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$) alters with whom they frequently communicated ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$). Egos were both blasting ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$) and being blasted ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$), and this exchange held a significant bearing on reputational outcomes.

Table 4.34. *Regression Models for Network Influence for Reputational Outcomes: Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	League	Team	Athlete
Beta	*β*	*β*	*β*
n =	363	129	506
Ego Attributes			
Age	**0.21****	-0.07	**0.19*****
Gender	0.03	-0.12	0.04
Ethnicity[a]	0.06	**-0.27***	-0.07
Ideology[a]	-0.12	-0.10	0.03
Partisanship[a]	0.07	**0.41*****	**0.17****
Alter Attributes			
Age	0.00	0.14	-0.07
Gender	-0.03	0.04	-0.01
Ethnicity[a]	-0.07	-0.04	**0.10***
Ideology[a]	0.06	-0.13	0.08
Partisanship[a]	-0.06	0.03	-0.08
Role | Relationship			
Family	-0.13	-0.34	0.12
Friends	-0.06	-0.36	-0.04
Multiplex	-0.18	-0.17	-0.04
Proximal	-0.03	-0.16	-0.08
Online Friend	0.05	0.13	0.06
Relational Ties			
Communication frequency	0.09	0.06	**0.15***
Relationship closeness	0.05	0.11	-0.11
Time known	**-0.15***	0.15	-0.10
Sport Interrelator	**0.37*****	0.10	-0.12
Sport-specific Attributes of Ego | Alter			
Alter is perceived as fan	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01
FANDOM	0.03	**0.52*****	0.07
FANSHIP	**-0.16****	-0.16	0.01
Fan	0.03	0.05	-0.04
Rival	0.02	-0.01	-0.01
Crisis Selected			
CTE	-0.25	-0.21	**-0.37*****
Deflategate	0.01	0.02	**-0.47****
EE | DV	0.02	0.12	**-0.28*****
#TakeaKnee	-0.04	-0.32	**-0.52*****
Activated Fan Behaviors			
CORF Seek	**-0.23*****	**-0.29****	0.04
CORF Avoid	-0.05	0.02	0.04
Egos Blasting Alters	**0.18***	0.27	**0.19****
Alters Blasting Ego	-0.10	**-0.30***	**0.17****
Schadenfreude	**0.17***	0.08	-0.01
R^2	0.28	0.74	0.31
Adjusted R^2	0.21	0.65	0.26
F for change in R^2	3.87***	8.13***	6.32***

Model significance: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

[a] Dummy coded: *Gender* male = 1, female = 0; *Ethnicity* Caucasian = 1, all else = 0; *Political Ideology* Conservative = 1, all else = 0; *Political Partisanship* Republican = 1, all else = 0.

Addressing RQ5c. $RQ5_c$ asked in which ways the composition of the sport crisis discussion network, combined with sport identification and fan behaviors, might have influenced stakeholders' perceptions. For reputational outcomes, each crisis attribution level again yielded very different positive and negative predictive influences. Ethnicity was the only alter attribute that was influential, and its influence was contained to the athlete level. This finding reveals that Caucasian alters were influential in egos' negative reputational perceptions in response to crises. No relational demographics were significant, but several relational ties were. For example, at the league level time known and the sport interrelator were influential, but in opposite ways. Alters known longest again reduced egos' negative perceptions but here, the more an ego and alters co-consumed sport; the more negative the reputational outcome. This finding makes sense given the fact that egos were most likely to discuss sport crises with rivals of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis, so those with which egos co-consume sport are those most likely to be congruent in perceptions. The only other significant relational tie influencing negative reputation perceptions was communication frequency at the athlete level.

Blasting and being blasted were the most significant influential fan behaviors across all three levels. At the league level, the propensity to seek out alters lowered negative reputation perceptions, but the activation of blasting and schadenfreude increased negative reputation perceptions. At the team level, the propensity to seek out alters again lowered negative reputation perceptions, and so did being blasted by alters. At the athlete level, however, both blasting and being blasted occurred and both resulted in increased negative reputational outcomes.

Sport identification influenced stakeholders' perceptions both positively and negatively. Higher fanship levels influenced less negative reputational perceptions at the league level.

Fandom was significantly influential at the team level, but like its influence in team level crisis perceptions, higher fandom influenced increased negative reputational outcomes.

Overall, and in response to $RQ5_c$, the influential factors of an egos network combined with fan behaviors and sport identification vary too widely across the three levels of crisis attribution to pinpoint any one definitive influential factor. Those most commonly noted influential factors, however, included alter ethnicity, time known, the sport interrelator, seeking out alters to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis, blasting and being blasted, and fandom. A deeper discussion concerning these findings is included in the discussion chapter that follows.

This concludes the findings for RQ1-5 and H1-6. To recap to this point, this dissertation set out to explore stakeholders' perceptions related to sport crises and how those perceptions might be similar to perceptions regarding general sport outcomes. Stakeholders' perceptions were analyzed for associations with sport identification and fan behaviors. Stakeholders' egocentric networks were analyzed to assess the selection, activation, and influence of stakeholders' offline and online social networks in informing resultant crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes related to sport crises. A discussion on the findings from both the traditional social science and egocentric discussion network analyses is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The prior chapter explained the findings of this dissertation's examination of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises, sport identification, fan behaviors, and the selection, activation, and influence of functionally specific egocentric discussion networks. The prior chapter presented the results of this dissertation's research questions and hypotheses. To synthesize, a synopsis of how all the findings meld together is offered first and then this chapter will discuss in more detail this dissertation's conceptual and methodological contributions to the literatures within which it was situated.

The underlying thesis to this dissertation was to investigate stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises, whether those perceptions were driven by sport identification, and to examine the affective and behavioral outcomes of those perceptions to explore whether reactions to sport crises were similar to those sport fans demonstrate in response to sport game outcomes. The short answer was yes, NFL stakeholders' reactions to sport crises track along the same perceptions and affective and behavioral outcomes as is displayed in response to general sport outcomes, just to a lesser degree. The longer answer involved many layered analytic results that revealed stakeholders' perceptions were as varied as their individually related histories.

This dissertation hypothesized that identification would have functioned as a protective propensity regarding one's favored sport entity but the direction that both social identification (fandom) and individual or team identification (fanship) tracked alongside stakeholders'

perceptions instead revealed that sport crises offered identified fans an additional opportunity to engage in classic depictions of sport rivalry. In other words, NFL stakeholders did not report perceptions of sport crises to a lesser degree because of their sport identification levels. Instead, their identification resulted in increased negative perceptions of sport crises involving others, which in turn increased out-group derogation and discordant communication because of feelings of joy at another sport entity's adversity. In the end, it was fandom, and not fanship, that held the strongest influence over stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport crises. Moreover, this dissertation's investigation into the selection, activation, and influence of stakeholders' offline and online social networks revealed that NFL fans exercised nearly as much image management for self and sport entities in response to sport crises as exercised in response to game outcomes. In all, sport crises appear to be perceived and discussed similarly to sport rivalry no matter the social or moral considerations related to the various crises investigated.

This chapter will discuss these synthesized findings in more detail. Here, a review of this dissertation's goals is restated and the gaps filled by this research are presented. A detailed discussion of each main area of focus includes a review of the knowledge upon which this research was built, how this dissertation extended that knowledge, and what questions remain.

Gaps in Current Literature Filled by this Research

This dissertation began with the aim of addressing three main conceptual and theoretical gaps in the current crisis communication and sport public relations literatures, as well as extending the current methodological approach to researching sport-related crisis communication. The three main gaps this dissertation aimed to fill included: (a) an empirical examination of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises; (b) analyses of the influential propensity of sport identification on crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes; and (c) the

exploration of the affective and behavioral outcomes that occur in response to sport crises. These goals were additionally accomplished by methodologically filling these three gaps with a network perspective.

Stakeholders' perceptions of sport-related crises are an imperative piece of the crisis puzzle because "it is the perceptions of a stakeholder that help to define an event as a crisis," (Coombs, 2014, p. 3). The assessment of stakeholders' perceptions in this dissertation, which included overall crisis perceptions and the reputational outcomes of those perceptions, addressed RQ1 and revealed NFL stakeholders' perceptions were indeed more negative than positive. Stakeholders' perceptions differed considerably across types of crises and attribution of responsibility upon the various levels of the sport entity. This initial gap needed to be filled before extending the situational crisis communication theory model to sport crises (see Figure 6.1) by teasing out understudied and underutilized assessment factors within the theory's model.

The second gap this dissertation aimed to fill was complimentary to the first. This dissertation set out to explore the influential propensity of sport identification on NFL stakeholders' perceptions regarding sport crises. Sport identification is a social psychological connection to a particular sport, sport team, or other fellow fans (Gantz et al., 2006; Hirt & Clarkson, 2011; Kruse, 1977, 1981; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann et al., 2001). Identification and involvement are closely intertwined. This is because the more involved a sports fan the more identified they become. Social psychologists note that highly identified sport fans consider any threat to the overall reputation or integrity of a beloved sport entity, a threat to their own self-image (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Rees et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1995). For these reasons, sport identification was tested in this dissertation in place of relational history, an

individualized complimentary perception component within the situational crisis communication theory model. This dissertation hypothesized that higher levels of identification would result in less negative perceptions. Surprisingly, the results of this dissertation offer a unique twist to the hypothesized relationship between identification and negative perceptions. The findings pertaining to sport identification further substantiate the importance of the identification concept in sport crises.

Perceptions and identification led this research to fill the third gap that relates to the affective and behavioral outcomes of sport crises. Emotional responses are more pronounced among sport consumers (Gantz et al., 2006; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010), and the emotional and behavioral responses to game outcomes were argued in this dissertation to be similar to those that occur in response to crisis (Cikara and Fiske, 2012; Coombs, 2007a: Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012). This dissertation uniquely applied fan behaviors from the sport communication literature, connected and extended the current crisis emotional outcomes, and examined both as the affective and behavioral outcomes alongside stakeholders' perceptions and sport identification. This dissertation furthered the current literatures in these areas with findings that indicate stakeholders perceive and communicate about sport crises in very similar ways as they perceive and communicate about game outcomes. These matters are discussed in a third subsection of this chapter.

This dissertation featured two distinct yet complimentary methods. Where appropriate, this chapter intertwines the findings of this research into a discussion framed by the network perspective. Additionally, the three main analytic network frameworks—selection, activation, and influence—enriched the explanatory power of the egocentric networks' findings, and this too is interwoven into this discussion chapter.

The conceptual, theoretical, and methodological gaps that were filled by this dissertation and other related items of note are discussed in the next three subsections. The first is a review of the new knowledge acquired relating to stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises.

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Sport Crises

This dissertation extended sport crisis communication with its empirical focus on stakeholders' perceptions. This research reached outside of retrospective content and rhetorical analyses of past crises and the experimental analyses of pseudo-crises to include an empirical deep dive into stakeholders' perceptions regarding real world sport-related crises. In so doing, situational crisis communication theory was extended by applying the theoretical components to sport crises, specifically, and testing components of the model by using sport-specific concepts. In this section, a discussion positioned at the praxis of the theoretical underpinnings of situational crisis communication theory and the findings of this research is presented.

Crisis Attribution

At the very root of situational crisis communication theory is attribution. Attribution is a powerful component to stakeholders' perceptions because attribution is an individual perception developed by a myriad of relational considerations. Coombs (2007a) makes it clear that attribution in the situational crisis communication theory model is responsibility, or blame, for a perceived wrongdoing. Crisis attribution and blame were measured in this dissertation as two important but separate components as a first step in the analyses of overall stakeholders' perceptions. In this dissertation, crisis attribution was more precisely measured than it has been in past studies by separating out perceived responsibility to the three levels of the NFL: the league as a whole organization, the team as a sport entity, and the individual athlete level. These levels of crisis attribution expanded the typical foci of crisis communication on the

organizational or individual level (Avery et al., 2010; Benoit, 2015; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015; Wenner, 2013), to add the third, team level with which sports fans highly identify (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1990), and included all three levels within the same analysis. This approach aided in the examination of more precise crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes for each of the four crises assessed across each level of the NFL.

This key component to this research's design was directly linked to the major hypotheses that sport identification would be an influencer of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises. At least since Wann and Branscombe's (1993, 1990) work on "team identification," sport communication literature has focused on the oneness felt by a sports fan with a beloved sport entity. Researchers have additionally connected sport identity to the image management of self (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2001). So, this dissertation inquired whether highly identified sport fans attribute crisis responsibility on their own beloved sport entity facing a crisis when their own image also hangs in the balance.

Findings indicate that the fewest number of respondents attributed crisis responsibility at the NFL team level and no significant differences were found among the four crises attributed to the team level. This was partly because of sport fans' preference to discuss sport crises involving other sport entities rather than discuss crises involving those they held near and dear. Still, it was the team level that held the strongest and most consistent statistical significance across the traditional social science and egocentric network analyses within this dissertation, especially related to sport identification. Taken together, this combination of results suggests that NFL stakeholders are practicing as much image management for themselves as they are for their beloved sport entity by focusing on the rivalry inherent in team sport.

It was for these reasons that crisis attribution was critical to capture at the team level in addition to the more traditional approach of focusing on the organizational and individual levels. Sport identification's specific role in relation to these findings is discussed later in this chapter, but the findings related to the three crisis attribution levels continue to be presented here to further discuss the importance of the findings surrounding this leveled attribution approach.

Stakeholders' Perceptions of NFL Crises

Coombs once noted that the "attribution process can have significant, negative ramifications" (Coombs, 2007b, p. 376), and this dissertation's findings added new knowledge that attribution also plays an ongoing, almost cyclical role in relation to crisis perceptions and not simply a one-time declaration of crisis responsibility. Crisis attribution proved an important antecedent to unearthing those results.

As mentioned, situational crisis communication theory is based upon attribution and the theory's overall aim is to help communicators dissect a crisis, and create and carry out an effective remediation plan. RQ1 was addressed by analyzing the extent of crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes regarding NFL crises among NFL stakeholders. Stakeholders, and especially highly-identified stakeholders, "interpret and react differently" to negative events (Zavyalova et al., 2016, p. 270), and knowing those differences could be key in remediating a crisis.

Stakeholders' perceptions and crisis attribution are important in gauging the overall implications of a crisis, and both inform corrective action and crisis remediation. The first action in any crisis plan is to initiate corrective action to protect stakeholders' psychological and physical wellbeing (depending upon the type of crisis). Corrective action must be accepted by the entity's publics in order to be effective, however. When that corrective action is not deemed

effective, perceptions grow increasingly negative and crisis attribution can shift. This dissertation's findings empirically supported this premise for crises in the NFL.

Crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes were negatively impacted by transgressions triggered at the athlete level because crises carried out by athletes were attributed to the team and the league levels. This occurred in the Deflategate and the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crises, in particular. For example, the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis resulted in crisis attribution and increased negative crisis perceptions and negative reputational outcomes for the league. Stakeholders perceived that the NFL had performed inadequately in oversight or corrective action.

The transfer of attributing crisis responsibility occurred in response to corrective actions that were perceivably unsuccessful or insincere. To explain, the Ezekiel Elliot domestic assault crisis occurred in the wake of the NFL's worst season on record for athlete-involved domestic assault cases (Schrotenboer, 2015, 2014). The NFL extended corrective actions such as harsher suspensions for athletes and new policies to support those harsher penalties, but the NFL's publics viewed that corrective action as too little, too late. Past research has suggested that identification with sport teams and favored athletes leaves sport fans with an innate need to close a crisis-induced dissonance gap, and the way in which that need is met is by a senior authority extending the appropriate corrective action (Kruse, 1981). When a breakdown in such disciplinary oversight occurred in the NFL and the domestic assault cases continued to occur, crisis attribution transferred from the athletes who actually carried out the domestic assaults, onto the league where oversight and appropriate corrective action perceivably failed.

Partitioning out the levels of the NFL organization and assessing stakeholders' perceptions lends new knowledge to the usefulness of the situational crisis communication

theory model when researching sport crises. The parsing out of levels was necessary to capture the baseline perceptions for later analyses of other key variables in this research. The levels helped to ascertain that team identification was indeed a statistically significant component to consider in sport crises. The second area of new knowledge the levels aided in revealing was the empirical support that regardless of crisis impetus, crisis attribution can shift levels. This was explained regarding stakeholders attributing crises to the league for perceived failed oversight regarding, for example, ongoing domestic assault carried out by athletes. This ongoing propensity for crisis attribution is a good reason to remediate a crisis quickly and not allow perceived wrongdoing to continually occur.

In all, this examination of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises extended situational crisis communication theory in three ways: (1) the application of the situational crisis communication theory to sport crises with a specific focus on stakeholders' perceptions (see Figure 6.1); (2) the pairing of stakeholders' perceptions with several conceptual frameworks specific to sport, including crisis attribution across the levels of a sport organization; and (3) the pairing of crisis research with a network perspective, which revealed new ways to conceptualize stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises. By testing underutilized components of situational crisis communication theory and pairing those components with egocentric discussion networks, this dissertation investigated stakeholders' perceptions alongside the propensity for stakeholders to become "increasingly vocal" in response to crises (Coombs, 2014; Frandsen & Johansen, 2010b; Frandsen & Johansen, 2005). The multi-theoretical, multilevel approach from the network perspective furthered this examination of stakeholders' perceptions throughout the social relationships reported in the egocentric networks (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Bush et al., 2017; Perry & Pescosolido, 2010). The following subsections go into greater detail concerning the

specific usefulness of the egocentric networks in teasing out the antecedents and outcomes related to stakeholders' perceptions, but first the next section describes in more detail how perceptions and identification commingled.

The Influential Relationship of Sport Identification

The second focus in this dissertation examined the relationships between stakeholders' perceptions and sport identification. The application of sport identification as relational history (Coombs, 2001) in this research focused on sport-specific crises was an important bridge to span for the sport public relations and crisis communication literatures. This dissertation examined whether or to what degree sport identification was influential to stakeholders' perceptions. This area tested the theoretical adherence of situational crisis communication theory to sport crises through the underlying assumption that a positive relational history results in less negative perceptions of crisis. This combination was examined by (a) measuring both social identification (fandom) and individual identification (fanship) and testing each statistically for influence on crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes; (b) exploring the egocentric networks' relational tie activations via identification; and (c) examining network influence on sport identification's relationship with stakeholders' perceptions. These matters are discussed in this subsection.

Sport Identification as an Influencer of Stakeholders' Perceptions

Personal experiences contribute to personal identification (Hirt & Clarkson, 2011). Identification has been noted to span along a continuum from no identification at all to high identification and close connectedness (Gantz et al., 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Some social psychologists claim there is a state versus trait component but base those arguments mostly upon the duration and strength of being a fan (Wann 2006, Wann et al., 2001), while other communication scholars have sought the underlying personality traits to being a sports fan

(Brown-Devlin et al., 2017). Even a "primary social identity" has been noted in connection with sport identification, which has additionally included an "emphasis on emotion over knowledge" (Hirt & Clarkson, 2011, pp. 2-3). Be it endurance or emotion or otherwise, some component of connectedness undeniably exists between sport fans and their favored sport entities. Researchers have been mostly remiss in measuring sport identification alongside stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises, however. This dissertation filled that gap.

This dissertation extracted the situational crisis communication theory model's assessment component, relational history, and tested relational history as sport identification. Sport communication research typically uses the two terms, fandom and fanship, broadly and interchangeably. This dissertation argued for a dichotomous investigation into both with an intentional effort to tease out how either or whether both may or may not be influencing stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises.

Sport identification was a central component to this dissertation and addressed several research questions and hypotheses. Additional discussions on sport identification's role in this dissertation's outcomes are discussed in the third subsection of this chapter. This subsection focuses on a discussion surrounding $RQ2_{a\text{-}c}$, which asked the extent of sport identification among NFL stakeholders, how or if that identification associated with stakeholders' perceptions regarding NFL crises, and more importantly, sport identification was examined as a influencer of stakeholders' perceptions. Hypotheses were also drawn that higher levels of fandom or fanship would result in less negative stakeholders' perceptions. Fandom, a social identity with sport, and fanship, often termed "team identification" by sport communication scholars (Billings et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Branscombe & Wann, 1991) varied in associations and influential propensity among NFL stakeholders' perceptions. Fandom levels were considerably weak

among NFL stakeholders, but fanship was strong. Both types of sport identification held an associative influence with stakeholders' perceptions but both tracked the opposite direction than hypothesized for influential propensity.

Fandom associated most strongly at team level, and at the team level, fandom associated even stronger with reputational outcomes than for crisis perceptions. Fanship also associated most strongly at team level, and fanship was additionally stronger for reputational outcomes than for crisis perceptions. Both were weakly associated at the league level, with the exception of fanship not at all associating with league reputational outcomes. Instead, fanship associated with athlete level reputational outcomes, which was the only associative significance found at the athlete level. The reputational outcomes at the athlete level were also the least severe among the reputation measurements.

As for sport identification being a predictor variable of crisis perceptions or reputational outcomes, fandom and fanship both showed limited reach in the regression models. Fandom and fanship both demonstrated an influential propensity at the league and team levels for crisis perceptions, and both were significantly related to reputational outcomes at the team level only. Directional significance found that higher levels of fandom and fanship resulted in more negative stakeholders' perceptions at the league and team levels for crisis perceptions and higher levels of fandom and fanship resulted in more negative stakeholders' perceptions at the team level for reputational outcomes. These results tracked in the opposite relational direction hypothesized, which would have connected identification to more positively leaning perceptions rather than negative perceptions.

The best way to explain these findings is by reaching to an additional fan behavior called "glory out of reflective failure," or GORFing as an example (Billings et al., 2017; Havard, 2014).

The basic underlying premise of GORFing is that the loss of a game by any other team is beneficial to one's own favorite team. GORFing's relationship with sport identification further substantiates that claim, and GORFing's conceptualization and measurement is closely related to schadenfreude (Billings et al., 2017). In sport crises, this dissertation's findings suggest that stakeholders' underlying relational history is significantly associated with negative crisis perceptions and negative reputational outcomes, especially at the team level. This is because (1) stakeholders were not significantly likely to attribute crisis to their own favorite team, and (2) stakeholders' identification is going to increase the propensity of negative perceptions because of the rivalry inherent in sport. Again, these relational associations of the concepts of crisis and the concepts of identification suggests the underlying thesis that stakeholders perceive sport crises in a similar manner as they perceive game outcomes holds some truth, and the way in which this is occurring is through feeling joyfully glorified by any other team's demise. Identification's role in that glorified feeling connects to the basic conceptual components of identification, which are in-group bias and out-group derogation.

Perhaps a shift in the way stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises is approached should be considered. To explain, crises have been approached as a continuum of severity in perceptions. As explained in the prior subsection, crisis attribution is dependent upon the amount of evidence and overall crisis responsibility. Relational history, the other key assessment factor, has revealed in past research that the more favorable a stakeholder's perceptions of the entity experiencing the crisis, the less severe their crisis perceptions and the reputational outcomes following the crisis. Switching out sport identification for relational history in sport-specific crises has revealed that in sport, the opposite becomes true. The more highly identified a sport fan, the more negatively they perceived sport crises, overall.

The fact that the team level was the level of crisis attribution where the strongest and most consistent significant findings related to sport identification existed, indicates that sport crises are perceived similarly as general sport rivalry, and not simply the direct connectedness to one's beloved team as originally hypothesized. These findings substantiate the extension of the situational crisis communication model to include fandom and fanship as a relational history assessment factor (see Figure 6.1), and these findings further highlight the coupling of identification with crisis attribution at the team level for sport crises.

Overall, sport identification levels were not extreme among NFL stakeholders. Still, both were significantly associated and influentially related to stakeholders' perceptions, but in an opposite manner than current knowledge in crisis communication would indicate. Sport-specific research, however, would lean more toward this rivalry outcome, especially studies that focus on the social psychology related to being a sports fan and the verbal aggression that results (Wann et al., 2016). This aspect will be addressed in more detail in the third subsection, but first a discussion on the endurance of sport identification when tested in egocentric networks is presented.

Sport Identification and the Activation of Relational Ties

Scholars have noted that sport identification has the greatest positive outcomes on psychological wellbeing because of the relational benefits sport fandom and sport fanship allows with fellow fans (Wann, 2006). Social psychologists have also noted that sport identification could be considered a trait for those with identification endurance (like Chicago Cubs fans, for example) or sport identification could be considered a state for those who ebb and flow in identification levels in response to perceived transfers of image threat (Jensen et al., 2016; Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2011). The discussion to follow envelops these assumptions by reviewing the

role of sport identification and tie activation in the sport-related egocentric discussion networks, as well as the endurance of sport identification when tested within an ego's offline and online social network.

Sport identification was assessed for its propensity to activate relational ties between egos and alters. In other words, sport identification was examined for its likelihood regarding an ego's activation of a dyadic relational tie (communication frequency, relationship closeness, the number of years known, and co-consumption of sport) with an alter in his/her network. Both fandom and fanship were examined.

$H4_a$ was not supported because stakeholders who scaled higher in fandom were only likely to activate the co-consumption of sport (the sport interrelator: see Appendix D), but none of the other three relational ties. Fanship, however, was positively and significantly likely to activate all four relational ties in both the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, which supported $H4_b$. In other words, stakeholders who scaled high in fanship were more likely to communicate frequently, be relationally close, know for longer periods of time, and co-consume sport within their sport discussion network and sport crisis discussion network.

These results suggest that fandom is possibly most likely to drive a social comparison, out-group derogation while fanship is more of a relational, fellow fan, in-group initiator. These results were further substantiated by sport identification's role in initiating fan behaviors, which will be discussed in the third subsection of this chapter. For now, the endurance of sport identification when immersed among network influences is discussed.

Network Influence and Sport Identification

The final assessment of $RQ5_c$ regarding network influence on stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises revealed different results from those noted in the traditional social science portion

of this research. For example, fandom and fanship were both significantly associated and influential to negative crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes, especially at the team level. Yet after accounting for network influence, only fandom remained significant (at the team level). Fanship failed to achieve significance at the team level when controlling for network influence. This was a surprising finding because sport communication research consistently notes that "die-hard" fans will not waiver in allegiance, no matter the perceived image threats that come about. The traditional social science portion of this dissertation supported those prior findings in not only sport identification, but also in some fan behavior outcomes, which will be explained later.

After controlling for network influence, fandom additionally emerged as significantly associated with negative crisis perceptions at the athlete level. Moreover, alters perceived as being a fan also became significant. These findings further substantiate fandom's role in stakeholders' perceptions, further supports the relational tie activation for the co-consumption of sport, and further nods toward fandom's emerging propensities to be an important concept to consider alongside sport crises.

Reputational outcomes, after controlling for network influence, revealed team level significance only for fandom. Fanship, did however uniquely reveal support for $H2_b$ for reputational outcomes after controlling for network influence, because the more negative a stakeholder perceived reputational outcomes, the lower the level of fanship the stakeholder reported. Fandom's endurance is noted at the team level in these results, but again this tracks opposite than originally hypothesized because the higher the fandom, the more negative the reputational outcome perceptions.

Fanship simply did not hold up when submersed within the egocentric networks. Does this make team identification a state, and fandom's propensity for social comparison a trait?

Conclusively, the higher a stakeholder's fandom, the more negatively crises and reputational outcomes were perceived among NFL stakeholders. To help explain the interchange that occurred from the traditional social science and network influence outcomes, only the stakeholders' socio-demographic variables were considered in conjunction with the analyses of fandom and fanship as predictive variables related to crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes in the traditional social science portion of this investigation. Fandom and fanship were both significantly related to crisis perceptions at the league and team levels, and both were significantly related to reputational outcomes at the team level. Later, however, when analyzing the influence of ego networks, results changed drastically for fanship, indicating that individual identification weakens extremely when amassed in an ego's offline and online social network. Fandom remained strong, however, especially at the team level for both crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. Fandom only waned for the league level after social immersion but grew in significance for crisis perceptions at the athlete level.

Other common influential factors for stakeholders' perceptions included alter ethnicity, the amount of time an ego knew an alter, co-consumption of sport (the sport interrelator), seeking out alters to discuss news and updates concerning the crisis, blasting and being blasted, and of course, fandom. These results indicate highly influential communicative outcomes for stakeholders' perceptions, which empirically supports the importance of the rhetorical arena in assessments of sport crises.

Resultantly, sport identification tracked the opposite direction hypothesized (e.g. rivalry), which arguably influenced discussant selection as well as the propensity to activate ties in the network, and an abundance of discordant communication tendencies emerged in both of the sport-related discussion networks. The influential propensity of offline and online social

networks cannot be understated. The discussion on the combination of sport identification and network influence continues in the next subsection that reviews the affective and behavioral outcomes related to sport crises.

Affective and Behavioral Outcomes of Sport Crises

This dissertation explored the affective and behavioral outcomes of sport crises. Crisis- and sport-specific constructs informed this portion of this research to both test and connect emotions and behaviors that occur in response to sport crises. Emotional responses and several fan behaviors were assessed for their role in reaction to sport game outcomes and to test each for application to sport crises. Bridging the affective and emotional response to sport crises, in particular, fills gaps in the sport public relations, crisis communication, and sport communication literatures.

This dissertation's exploration into crisis emotions and fan behaviors in response to game outcomes and in response to sport crises directs this subsection into three areas of discussion: (a) schadenfreude as an emotional and a behavioral crisis response; (b) the psychological and behavioral measurement associations of the fan behaviors; and (c) a discussion examining the divergent nature of sport identification as an antecedent for fan behavior tie activation in response to game outcomes and in response to sport crises. This subsection concludes with a discussion on fan-to-rival communication and the propensity for discordant communication in response to sport crises.

The affective and behavioral outcomes of crisis in the situational crisis communication theory model includes sympathy and anger for emotions and negative word-of-mouth and future purchase intentions for behaviors. This dissertation again extended the model to include sport-specific considerations. This research added schadenfreude as a third crisis emotion, and added

an array of fan behaviors to the behavioral outcomes portion of the model. The egocentric discussion networks were conceptualized as an ideal technique to examine the situational crisis communication theory's word-of-mouth considerations.

Affective reactions are the antecedents to behavior (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Krosnick & Petty, 1995), so this dissertation additionally explored attitude to behavior consistency by measuring stakeholders' psychological measurements related to several fan behaviors. Then those fan behaviors were observed, operationalized as a dyadic exchange of communication between an ego and each of his/her alters (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). The combination of methods in this dissertation enabled the detailed testing of the theoretical underpinnings of fan behaviors. Fan behaviors, which were plucked from the sport communication literatures where they are typically discussed as reactive behavioral responses to game outcomes, were additionally explored for their associations with sport crises. The combined analyses addressed $RQ3_b$ and $RQ5_a$, which questions how fan behaviors and stakeholders' perceptions were associated, and addressed $RQ3_a$, $RQ5_b$, and H5, which further explored fan behaviors and sport identification. A discussion on schadenfreude (see $RQ3_c$, H3 and H6) as both an emotional response and a communication behavior positions this subsection as a supporting argument for crisis emotions and fan behavior assessments in sport crises research.

Schadenfreude: A Joyful, Albeit Discordant, Crisis Response

Schadenfreude is breaking into the crisis discourse and sport communication literatures as a discordant communicated emotional response to game outcomes and now, sport crises (Cikara et al., 2011; Cikara and Fiske, 2012; Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach & Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958). Cikara and Fiske, (2012) note that schadenfreude is triggered in three ways: when a misfortune befalls an envied person;

when the misfortune is perceived as deserved; and when there is something to be gained for the observer from that misfortune. Schadenfreude was conceptualized and measured in this dissertation as both an emotional response to sport crises and as a communicated fan behavior in response to sport game outcomes and sport crises, and found both to be complimentary to researching stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises.

The analyses of schadenfreude first addressed $RQ3_c$ which explored the presence or absence of schadenfreude as an emotional crisis response to repercussions related to each sport crisis. Additionally, schadenfreude was assessed alongside the other crisis emotions of sympathy and anger. This dissertation additionally hypothesized (see H3) that schadenfreude as a communicated fan behavior would correlate with negative crisis perceptions and negative reputational outcomes, and that schadenfreude in response to sport crises would not significantly differ from egos' reported schadenfreude in general sport rivalry (see H6).

Schadenfreude as a discordant reaction to another's misfortune was indeed present and prevalent throughout this research. The emotions measurements in this dissertation were very limited, still they remained theoretically consistent (Coombs 2007a) with the presence of sympathy falling to a completely opposite direction as schadenfreude when associated with reputational outcomes. Schadenfreude was reported most frequently at the team and athlete levels (anger was most frequently reported at league level) and schadenfreude significantly correlated with crisis perceptions across all three levels of the NFL. These findings, albeit cautionary because of the limited measurement applied in this dissertation, positioned schadenfreude as a viable crisis emotion.

Schadenfreude as a communicated fan behavior additionally showed promise in relation to sport crises. Schadenfreude was significantly more likely to be directed at rivals in the sport

discussion network, yet virtually no discrimination existed in activating schadenfreude in the sport crisis discussion network. Schadenfreude in both discussion networks was activated by both fandom and fanship, and more importantly, schadenfreude was the only fan behavior tie activated by both fandom and fanship in both sport-related discussion networks. Schadenfreude was additionally associated with negative crisis perceptions, as hypothesized. These results regarding schadenfreude and its connection to sport identification and negative crisis perceptions further supported this dissertation's underlying thesis that sport fans likely filter sport crises in a manner similar to general sport rivalry, which at a rivalry's core would be the feeling of joy at another's adversity. These findings also extend the current premise expressed in the crisis communication literatures that crises are altogether negative. In sport crises, some stakeholders clearly perceive crises as highly positive—as long as the crisis befalls a rival, of course.

Additionally of note was schadenfreude's strong presence as both a crisis emotion and as a communicated fan behavior in response to sport game outcomes and in response to sport crises, yet its insignificance in the final network influence regression models nod to the assumption that such affective and behavioral outcomes were a result of stakeholders' perceptions and not an antecedent. In other words, schadenfreude's presence was strong but not predictive of stakeholders' perceptions. This supports the basic model proposed by the situational crisis communication theory regarding affective and behavioral outcomes of crisis and extends the theory by bridging the emotional and the behavioral outcomes of crises. Not only was that bridging achieved with schadenfreude's conceptualization as a crisis emotion and as a communicated behavioral tie in the discussion networks, but also that bridging was achieved by the assessment of the psychological measurements of fan behaviors in the traditional social science portion of this dissertation and the actual activation of fan behaviors in the discussion

networks. Next is a discussion on the associations between the psychological measurements and behavioral outcomes of the fan behaviors.

Fan Behaviors in Networks: Psychological Measurements and Behavioral Actualities

The associations between the traditional psychological measurements of each fan behavior and the actual activation of each fan behavior, as reported by ego-alter dyad, were assessed for association strengths. These tests were conducted to review respondents' perceptions concerning their feelings against their reporting of the actual activation of that behavior with discussants in their networks. The fan behaviors measured included CORFing, blasting, and schadenfreude.

Overall, fan behaviors were present and activated in both the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network, The fan behaviors tracked in similar strength intervals in both sport-related discussion networks, although consistently the strength of activation was slightly weaker in the sport crisis discussion network than was found in the sport discussion network. CORFing did not associate very strongly between perception and activation, schadenfreude measurement and actual activation held the strongest association and blasting came in as a strong second.

CORFing as an avoidance strategy was actually reported for higher prevalence among dyadic activations than egos responded as perceptions for self. As a result, CORFing as an avoidance tendency held the weakest association among the two measurements for perception versus activation. CORFing has been associated with "fair-weather fans" in sport communication literature, and "die-hard fans" have been mostly noted to not be likely to cut themselves off during challenging times (Billings et al, 2017; Spinda, 2011). This research would have

supported those results in the traditional social science analyses, however, the egocentric networks tell a different, more compelling story.

Sport fans may not necessarily be disconnecting from news and highlights in response to game outcomes but in the sport discussion network, they were very much likely to disconnect from interpersonal discussions related to those news and highlights concerning negatively-perceived game outcomes. The network analyses further revealed that CORFing was not occurring with fellow fans, which makes sense since a fellow fan would be most likely to commiserate over the loss. CORFing in the sport crisis discussion network was reported but was significantly weaker in activation than was noted in the sport discussion network. It is important to point out here that rivals of the entity experiencing the crisis were those most likely to be selected for sport crisis discussions.

Blasting and being blasted ended up among the most influential factors in stakeholders' perceptions of crises, after controlling for network influence. Blasting was measured as the propensity to trash talk others after game wins or losses. In the egocentric discussion networks, blasting was measured as ego or alters actually doing so. In other words, the activation of the communicated dyadic tie between the ego and each alter was measured as propensity of ego blasting each alter and ego reporting the likelihood of each alter blasting the ego. In both discussion networks, egos reported a higher likelihood of being blasted than doing the blasting but strengths were comparable. Blasting measurement and activation were strongly associated.

The presence of schadenfreude as a communicated fan behavior was strong among the egos in both the sport and sport crisis discussion network, and in fact very slightly stronger amongst egos in the sport crisis discussion network. However, the actual reported activation of schadenfreude with alters was much weaker in both discussion networks, and in fact, under the

median for both discussion networks. Still though, the association of perceptions and the actual activations of schadenfreude were very strong, and in fact the associations were strongest for schadenfreude among all fan behavior measurements across both sport-related networks.

The extension of fan behaviors and crisis emotions again further contributes to the situational crisis communication theory model by extending emotions to include joy, and extending behaviors with sport-specific fan behaviors that connect theoretically to identification and thus relational history. As is the case within any social science and theoretical model, the assessment factors within the model are not linear when naturally occurring as real world phenomena, but the relationships between them are interconnected and entwined. This research helped to stitch together the connections between sport identification, relational history, and the affective and behavioral outcome inherent in crises.

Divergent Triggers: Sport Identification and Fan Behaviors

Among the most intriguing findings of this research were the differences between the sport discussion network and sport crisis discussion network in activated fan behavior ties, and more specifically, the influential and relational network components of those activations. Sport identification proved to be directly related to the activation of fan behavior ties in both of the sport-related egocentric discussion networks and the multilevel analyses revealed the ways in which each fan behavior was most likely to be activated.

Fandom and fanship demonstrated divergent tie activation propensities between the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network. In the sport discussion network, NFL stakeholders did not select any specific socio-demographic or relational connection to their discussants when activating fan behaviors in response to game outcomes—other than the discussant being a uniquely-listed rival. Not surprisingly, this result coupled most with fanship.

In the sport crisis discussion network, social connections appeared to become important, and the activation of fan behaviors, like other aspects in the selection, activation, and influence of the network, became more intimate when discussing sport crises versus game outcomes. Fandom was the most significant across the activations of fan behavior ties in response to sport crises. Fanship's likelihood to activate fan behaviors in response to game outcomes, and fandom's likelihood to activate fan behaviors in response to sport crises, supported both the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of identification and the image management propensities of identification and fan behaviors.

Egos were clearly reacting to perceived image threats and hitting back with characteristic out-group derogation when crises occurred in sport. The presence of schadenfreude and blasting in both networks nods to the superiority notion in the social comparison literature (Rees et al., 2015; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 2001, 1979). Fans were differentiating themselves and their in-group above their rival alters, and they were doing so to those who were fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis, too. This out-group derogation and display of joy during a time of adversity for another sport entity further brings into question whether fans are separating sport game outcomes from sport crises.

Blasting and schadenfreude were the only two fan behaviors that resulted in both fandom and fanship as significant likely antecedents for activation. Both were activated with uniquely listed rival fans, but not uniquely listed fellow fans in the sport-related networks. Combined, these results signify that stakeholders are applying image management strategies (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Wann, 2006) in response to both game outcomes and sport crises. This is the first empirical investigation to test the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of sport identification and fan behaviors with sport crises within egocentric discussion networks. The

result of this investigation reveals that the combination of sport identification and the activation of fan behaviors lend themselves to image management strategies for self as well as for the sport entity across image threats, no matter the societal implications that differing crises might represent. These findings further substantiate this dissertation's conceptualization of the relational history assessment factor and testing sport identification in its place.

At the root of these fan behaviors, common themes have emerged among this dissertation's findings, including image management (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980), in-group/out-group bias and social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Turner, 1985) and superiority over other out-groups, rivals, or losing teams (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1995). Sport communication scholars have connected sport identification as an underlying factor of fan behaviors (Billings et al., 2017; Brown-Devlin et al., 2017; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and social psychologists and media effects scholars have noted self-esteem as a driver of fan behaviors and as a coping mechanism (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Hirt et al., 1992; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Wann (2006) connected all the dots of this argument to posit that sport identification is a multidimensional construct linked to self-esteem. This dissertation supports these prior findings in the sport communication literature and extends these concepts to additionally apply to sport crises.

Next, a deeper discussion about the discordant communication that was revealed within the sport and sport crises discussion networks follows. In particular, the fan-to-rival fan behaviors are discussed in relation to situational crisis communication theory's behavioral outcomes component.

Sport Identification as a Discordant Communication Activator

Threats to the overall reputation or integrity of a sport entity are perceived as a personal image threat (Wann, 2006) and fans actively engage in in-group bias, out-group derogation, and other forms of superiority-expressing communication (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Billings et al., 2017; Rees et al., 2015; Spinda, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1995) in an attempt to manage personal image (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). We now know that these same reactions occur in response to sport crises.

Coombs (2007a) expressed for many years that crises result in negative word-of-mouth and scholars and practitioners alike work under the premise that it is the job of crisis communicators and public relations practitioners to reduce those negatively valenced conversations. Out-group derogation-driven forms of communication are referred to as fan-to-rival fan behaviors (e.g. blasting and schadenfreude) in the sport communication literatures (Bernache-Assollant et al., 2007; Billings et al., 2017; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda 2011; Havard, 2014; Jensen et al., 2016). Others have noted that fans simply engage in avoidance strategies such as CORFing (Campbell et al., 2004; Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). This dissertation therefore assessed and compared the affectively-charged and behaviorally-activated communication outcomes in response to sport game outcomes and sport crises by collecting and analyzing sport fans' egocentric discussion networks. Through these egocentric discussion networks, an arena of discordant communication was revealed.

To explain, crisis research has assumed that personal attachment or relational history (i.e. identification) results in less negative feelings related to the entity experiencing the crisis. In sport, however, we now know that crises are perceived as much more about rivalry than about

one's own beloved entity. Therefore, quite a lot of joy and out-group derogation occurred in response to such projection. For example, egos were blasting fans of the team or athlete experiencing the crisis, and alters were blasting right back. In fact, stakeholders were blasting in response to sport crises, just about as strongly as they were blasting rivals after a game loss. The same was true for the activation of schadenfreude, all of which further supports the underlying premise of this research that sport crises are indeed unique in comparison to the more traditional organizational crises, and that sport fans filter sport crises in the same manner as sport rivalry. Connecting these matters to the network perspective provided an increased explanatory avenue to understanding this phenomena.

Sport-related discussion networks are an arena of discord. Egocentric networks are theorized to rest upon the trilogy assumption of homophily, proximity, and social support (Monge & Contractor, 2003). In fact, the trilogy has been theorized as "remarkably consistent" in egocentric communication because homophily and proximity provide a supportive network that promotes open communication with similar others who share similar socio-demographic characteristics, are proximally close and therefore more easily accessible; and together, homophily and proximity create a supportive network (Borgatti et al., 2013; Eveland & Kleinman, 2013; McPherson et al., 2001, p. 429). As aforementioned, homophily and proximity were both supported in this research, but social support was not directly measured.

Homophily and proximity were tested alongside functional specificity (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010) and role-topic dependency (Bearman & Parigi, 2004) in this dissertation. Homophily is a key component to the network perspective because homophily is at the very epicenter of network selection, which undoubtedly precedes and flows into activation and influence. Homophily's theoretical mechanism is similarity, or the selection of comparable

others based upon one's own group identity (Contractor et al., 2006). The sport-related discussion networks were mostly homogeneous in socio-demographic composition. The sport crisis discussion network differed in political partisanship from the other discussion networks but overall was homogeneous as well. Proximity was tested by expanding the name generators to specifically collect both offline and online discussants but egos in the sport-related networks still far and above chose to list discussants who were relationally and proximally close and not uniquely online friends. Functional specificity and role-topic dependency additionally helped to parse out stakeholders' network members who were specifically fellow fans or rivals and were reportedly communicated with for those specific reasons.

Researchers note that "social relationship processes cannot be fully understood when relationships are divorced from characteristics of individuals and those in their networks," (Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, p. 124). This dissertation made every attempt to include the characteristic details of NFL stakeholders and those with whom they discuss sport and sport crises. In so doing, the rivalry of sport, and its reach into sport crises, revealed an arena full of discord. The presence of the fan-to-rival fan behavior discourse was strongly associated with sport identification in both discussion networks. Functional specificity aided in the assessment of relational ties with sport-specific fellow fan and rival discussants. Results were especially intriguing in the sport-related discussion networks where unique rival discussants were those with whom stakeholders were most likely to activate fan behaviors related to game outcomes, and fans of the sport entity experiencing the crisis in the sport crisis discussion network were those with whom stakeholders were most likely to activate fan behaviors related to crises.

These findings were counterintuitive to the more traditional egocentric network underpinnings, however, because this rival tie activation demonstrated a seemingly antithesis

that communication flows less freely among members of a network made up of dissimilar, far away connections, who are unsupportive (Contractor et al., 2006). The sport-related social relationship processes combined with the sport-related individual characteristics told a deeper story because communication, and more importantly discordant communication (e.g. blasting and schadenfreude), flourished between egos and their peripheral, dissimilar alters.

These findings are important to the overall premise behind egocentric networks because few studies take discord into account. For example, Perkins et al (2015) found that among 105 research projects measuring health-related ego networks only one name generator focused on capturing a negatively valenced tie ("Can you list people that sometimes make you feel bad or upset?"). This indicates that the health-focused egocentric research reviewed was mostly focused on agreeable communication. Politically focused egocentric research widened that net but that research consistently finds that people are not likely to continue speaking with disagreeable alters (Bello & Rolfe, 2014).

This dissertation highlights the importance of taking both positive and negative communication into consideration when conducting egocentric discussion network research. The discordant discussants were just as influential to stakeholders' perceptions as the agreeable discussants. The sport-related egocentric network analyses denote that fellow fans in the sport discussion network and rivals of the entity experiencing the crisis were perceived as safe, congruent in perceptions, and socially supportive in discussions regarding game outcomes and crises. The selection of compatible others based upon one's own group identity (Contractor et al., 2006) was clearly evidenced in these instances.

In all, the findings from this research offered a more complete picture of the rivalry propensity that consumes sport, and now we know that propensity exists for sport crises, too.

Sport rivalry is therefore conclusively a critical component to consider in researching sport-related crisis communication.

The doubled methodological approach applied in this dissertation enriched the overall investigation of stakeholders' perceptions by stretching the investigation beyond the uniplex data commonly measured in social science to include the multiplex relationships that socially influence perceptions, as well as outcomes, including communication (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Bush et al., 2017; Contactor et al., 2006; Feld, 1981; Monge & Contractor 2003; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010; Wellman, 1992). The significantly influential discordant communication is an important addition to current research related to crisis communication.

In sum, crisis-related emotions and fan behaviors in response to game outcomes existed in response to game outcome and sport crises. Schadenfreude as an emotional crisis response and as a communicated behavior in response to sport crises additionally showed significance to both sport crisis communication and fan behavior research. The psychological and behavioral measurement associations of the fan behaviors revealed that CORFing was more likely to occur in interpersonal communication than in media consumption, which extends current sport communication literature. And finally, sport identification showed clear distinctions in fan behavior activation between the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, with the sport discussion network driven by fanship (team identification) and the sport crisis discussion network driven by fandom (socially relational identification), all of which resulted in widespread discordant communication.

The situational crisis communication theory's negative word of mouth component was both bridged to crisis communication and extended by revealing the ways in which sport fans engage in discordant communication in response to sport crises. The implications of this

theoretical extension are discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter that follows. First, a synopsis of this discussion chapter follows.

Chapter Synopsis

This dissertation filled three main gaps in the sport public relation and crisis communication literatures. Those gaps included an empirical investigation into stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises, the influential propensity of sport identification regarding those perceptions, and the bridging exploration of the affective and behavioral outcomes that occur in response to sport crises.

Capturing stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises aided in extending the situational crisis communication theory model to include several conceptual frameworks specific to sport, while exploring the sociological levels inherent in a sport organization. In so doing, crisis attribution proved key in the assessment of perceived crisis responsibility being transferred for perceived lack of oversight or discipline regarding sport crises.

The investigation of sport identification, including social identification (fandom) and individual identification (fanship), revealed the relational influence on crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes but more interestingly unearthed the connection of sport crises to traditional sport rivalry. This antithesis to the direction hypothesized was an intriguing finding that was further substantiated in the egocentric network analyses for a clear explanation as to why such rivalry was being triggered.

Crisis emotions and fan behaviors in response to game outcomes and in response to sport crises revealed how the affective and behavioral outcomes related to sport crises do not differ much from the affective and behavioral outcomes related to game outcomes. Moreover, the divergent nature of sport identification as antecedents for fan behavior tie activation further

substantiated the overall findings from this research that sport rivalry is activated by crisis similarly as it is in response to game outcomes. Additionally, both result in image management strategies such as out-group derogation, social comparison, and superiority which all combine to result in fan-to-rival fan behaviors that promote discordant communication.

The methods applied in this dissertation enriched the overall measurements and analyses, making the network perspective connection to crisis research a succinct and measureable connector of the main foci included in this dissertation. The explorations within the egocentric networks' selection, activation, and influence provided new knowledge that can direct scholars and practitioners alike in the areas of sport public relations, crisis communication, and sport communication. The final following chapter will address this dissertation's implications on theory, method, and practice, as well as present the limitations of this research and the exciting new directions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

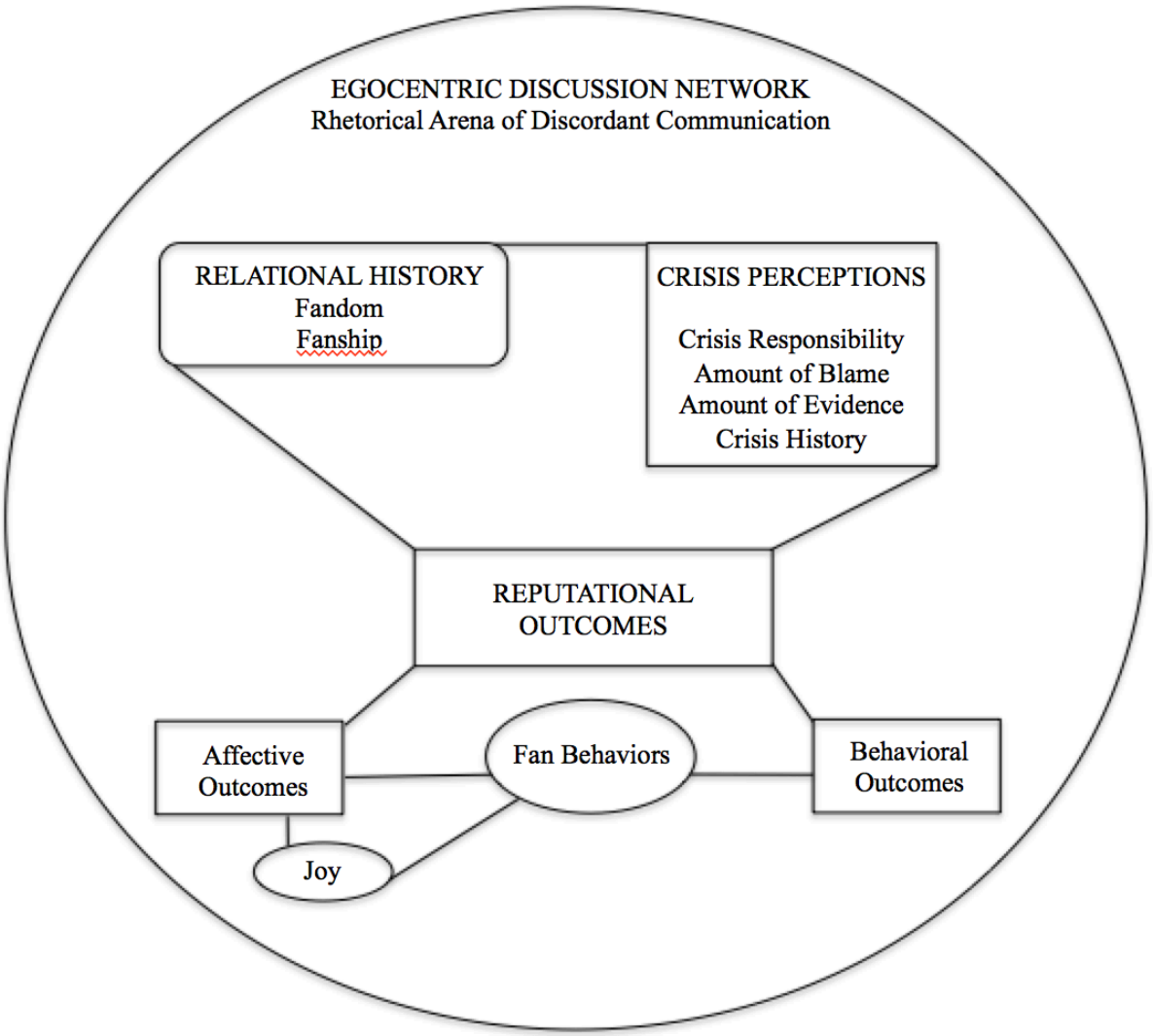
CONCLUSION

The prior chapter discussed the three main gaps this dissertation aimed to fill: (a) an empirical examination of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises; (b) the influential propensity of sport identification on crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes; and (c) the exploration of the affective and behavioral outcomes that occur in response to sport crises. In that discussion, the role of sport identification in relation to stakeholders' perceptions and the affective and behavioral outcomes identification activated, revealed the discordant communication related to sport and sport crises. This chapter will present the implications this dissertation offers to the theory, method, and practice areas of sport public relations, crisis communication, and sport communication; as well as present this dissertation's limitations and directions for future research. The implications for theory are presented first.

Implications for Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis communication is evolving from the one-way outward communication focus of its origins, and that evolution is coinciding with crisis research expanding from retrospective content and rhetorical analyses to more empirical examinations. The gaps in the sport public relations, crisis communication, and sport communication literatures filled by the findings of this dissertation additionally position this research into the larger contextual and theoretical considerations regarding crisis communication—namely, the emerging rhetorical arena.

Figure 6.1. *The Situational Crisis Communication Theory Model in Sport Crises*



The rhetorical arena is an emerging framework focused on a multi vocal approach and growing in consideration among scholars and practitioners alike. Historically, over half (59%) of all crisis communication research has focused on communication that flows outward from an organization in response to crises (Avery et al., 2010; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015). While some research has contextually or rhetorically analyzed mediated reactions to crises, the power structure perception that exists in crisis communication has hardly been shattered. This is because historically, when an organization communicated outwardly, little allowance for widespread reciprocal dialogue existed—or so was thought. Today however, stakeholders more

broadly communicate through socially mediated channels, and crisis communicators and crisis communication scholars are now reconsidering that earlier approach. This dissertation's results of the egocentric discussion network analyses suggest this "multi-vocal" arena (Frandsen & Johansen, 2005, p. 2) has been occurring all along in sport crises, however, and it is time practitioners and scholars take notice and action.

Situational crisis communication theory posits that "negative word-of-mouth" (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, p. 40) is a major concern regarding stakeholders' perceptions of crises. In other words, situational crisis communication theory claimed that stakeholders resultantly speak poorly of the entity experiencing the crisis. This dissertation found that negative word-of-mouth extends to a discordant exchange between stakeholders and is not just solely focused on the entity experiencing the crisis as past research indicates. In other words, sport fans are activating sport rivalry in response to sport crises and initiating action and reaction within the rhetorical arena. Further, the implications of this dissertation's findings revealed that network influence within the rhetorical arena can minimize even the influential team identification of die hard fans. What other influential reach does the rhetorical arena possess?

This dissertation examined how American sport fans participate in discussions concerning crises, and the selection, activation, and network influence of those discussions. The implications for situational crisis communication theory include sport-specific crisis insight that extended the boundaries and underlying assumptions of the theory. This dissertation's application of the theory to focus on stakeholders' perceptions of crisis, and the testing of identification as relational history and its influential propensity on those perceptions, extended the theory empirically. Additional development of situational crisis communication theory was achieved by adding a third crisis emotion, schadenfreude, and connecting the activations and

relationships of affective and behavioral crisis outcomes. Next, the method and practice implications of this dissertation are presented.

Implications for Sport-Related Public Relations Methods

Egocentric discussion network analyses are growing in popularity in sociological studies related to health and political communication, but this dissertation proves its additional usefulness for researching crisis communication, sport communication, and public relations. Stakeholders' egocentric discussion networks proved essential in telling a much deeper story concerning stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises. The discussion networks also served as an actualized vehicle for studying the behavioral outcome hypothesized in situational crisis communication theory, word-of-mouth.

The egocentric discussion networks captured and explored in this dissertation allowed the investigation into the selection, activation, and influence of stakeholders' offline and online social networks in relation to crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes regarding sport crises. The discussion networks expanded current knowledge regarding who exactly stakeholders select for functionally specific sport and sport crises-related discussions, how connected stakeholders were to those they chose to speak with about such matters, and what types of communication was activated amongst those relationships when discussing sport crises. The application of situational crisis communication theory with the network perspective aided in a deeper investigation than could have been achieved by a traditional social science investigation. The egocentric network analysis allowed for multi-theoretical, multilevel analyses to pinpoint the influential social phenomena that helped shape stakeholders' perceptions while keeping intact the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the variables.

The egocentric discussion networks also allowed for a comparison study of the selection, activation, and influence of three functionally specific discussion networks. Of note were the similarities and differences between the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, and the tie activations that uniquely occurred within each network. The revelation that sport identification as divergent antecedent activators of fan behaviors among the two networks cannot be overstated. This method possesses great promise in aiding in future explorations into the dichotomization of social and individual sport identification because of its ability to more deeply and richly explain the relationships and tie activations among sport-specific concepts.

Again, the ego network analyses and traditional social science combination extended the application of situational crisis communication theory and this combination further extended the methodological reach of crisis communication research. Findings from both methods applied in this dissertation informed considerations for the practice of public relations and the remediation of crises. The next section presents the practical implications of this research.

Implications for Sport-Related Public Relations Practice

The discordant, rivalry-focused communication in sport and sport crises possesses several implications for the practice of sport public relations and crisis communication. The fan-to-rival propensity in sport communication is a serious implication for practitioners to consider. Recall for a moment that at the epicenter of the situational crisis communication theory model is reputation. Reputation rests upon word-of-mouth (see Hopwood et al., 2013).

This research found blasting was influential for increasing the likelihood of negative reputational outcomes. For example, such discord was prominently displayed among older Republicans who were both blasting and being blasted about the #TakeaKnee crisis when attributed at the athlete level. The NFL's leadership was delayed in its league response while the

protests carried on and the president and vice president made public comments denouncing the disrespect of the American flag and national anthem. Stakeholders did not receive any clear or consistent talking points from the NFL regarding the athlete protests, and were therefore left to react through the lens of their own identities and beliefs (i.e. political partisanship).

Athletes and teams additionally demonstrated conflicting approaches throughout the league. For example, during a Monday night game in September 2017, Cowboys owner Jerry Jones along with the team's coaches and players took the field, locked arms, knelt, and then stood as the national anthem performance began. Two weeks later, Jones publically denounced the movement and threatened that any Cowboys player who knelt during the national anthem would not be allowed to play the game. This attempt at satiating the players and fans from both perceptional sides of the debate was ineffective and only caused further confusion, ire, and discord. It was not until several weeks had passed that Commissioner Roger Goodell announced that players' rights would not be suppressed and no retribution would be carried out should any player choose to kneel. This message was offered late in the crisis timeline.

Public relations practitioners and crisis communicators should not only assess and measure, but also engage, the rhetorical arena. If reputation is partly about what others say about you or your organization (Hopwood et al., 2013), then practitioners should preemptively and proactively offer identified stakeholders the necessary talking points to effectively compete in the rhetorical arena to engage in as much image management for self as they do for their beloved sport entity. In the #TakeaKnee crisis, Goodell's message, had it been immediately offered alongside a non-conflicting, league-wide stance, could have minimized the blasting back-and-forth among stakeholders and therefore reduced the negative reputational outcomes.

One other item of note that emerged in the ego networks concerning the practice of sport public relations was the support for COATing (Jensen et al., 2016) as an additional fan behavior. "Celebrating our achievements together" can become a powerful public relations initiative for sport entities experiencing crises. Pairing COATing with word-of-mouth reputational defense trainings and the inherent need for image management, and sport entities could equip their stakeholders for the discord they will face in the rhetorical arena.

Limitations

Several conceptual and methodological limitations exist within this dissertation, as with any social science investigation. For one, any sweeping suggestions from the findings of this dissertation across all sport would be premature. This broad conceptualization of sport crises should be carefully considered because this research investigated only the perceptions surrounding one sport organization, the NFL.

Methodological limitations included first and foremost the self-selection of survey respondents into one of the four crises. A majority of respondents selected into the #TakeaKnee crisis which was the most publicized NFL-related crisis at the time data were collected. This indicates a recency effect and this abundance of #TakeaKnee respondents could have arguably skewed the results. With an unequal number of cases across the four crises, other measurements of stakeholders' perceptions were subsequently shifted including crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes. Still, the drill down questionnaire relating to the subjective knowledge and communication propensity of all four crises were important for data collection and subsequent analyses for the discussion networks. Furthermore, the focus of this research rested upon the levels of crisis attribution more than the crises themselves. In other words, the crisis variety was offered for a more comprehensive assessment of stakeholders' perceptions, sport

identification, and the resultant fan behaviors demonstrated in response to perceptions and identification.

Another measurement limitation included the blanket reputation measurement across all three levels of the NFL, which was not ideal. Organizational reputations are arguably different from individual-level reputations so such a blanket measurement across the league, team, and athlete levels could have had an adverse effect on data significance at the athlete level.

This dissertation's exploration of emotional response to sport crises has its limitations in measurement because the strength of the three feelings was not captured. This initial investigation was intended to be a starting point for exploring whether and in what ways schadenfreude might have been present among stakeholders in response to sport crises. It was not the intent of this research to insinuate any definitive findings or make any broad assumptions related to emotional responses to sport crises, specifically. Still, the findings indicate that schadenfreude is present as both an emotional response and a communicated behavior in response to sport crises.

Finally, limitations existed in the ego network design. The greatest of these limitations was that egos report their own perceptions regarding their alters, so these data were arguably ego level perceptions of relational ties and not conclusive or verified alter socio-demographic information. Some researchers note this aspect of egocentric networks is a limitation and others argue such reporting provides insightful variables to aid in measuring outcomes.

Future Research in Sport-Related Public Relations

This dissertation empirically examined stakeholders' perception of sport crises, while taking into account sport identification, and comparatively analyzing the affective and behavioral outcomes stakeholders demonstrated in response to game outcomes and sport crises. This

dissertation answered many questions related to sport public relations and crisis communication that now serves as a launchpad toward exciting new directions for future research. To be brief, three areas of future research include (1) more work on a clear dichotomy of fandom and fanship, (2) an extended measurement of schadenfreude as a crisis response, and (3) a call for the network perspective in more sport, public relations, and crisis communication research.

Additional research on the clear dichotomization of sport identification measures defining the social and individual or team identification levels and how each influence relational tie activations, game outcomes, and stakeholders' perceptions would be an invaluable addition to the sport communication and sport public relations literatures. After such clear distinction is achieved, a replication of this study would be an exciting undertaking.

Fandom and fanship both play important antecedent roles in fan behaviors, the co-consumption of sport, crisis perceptions, reputational outcomes, and of course, schadenfreude. Schadenfreude as a crisis response and other positive perceptions-focused crisis research must continue to be explored. This fresh spin on the valence of crisis perceptions suggests exciting new avenues for future crisis communication research, especially related to sport crises. One specific area to delve deeper into would be the measurement of the strength of schadenfreude as a crisis emotion.

Finally, the combination of methods applied to this dissertation proved invaluable to the deep assessment of stakeholders' perceptions of sport crises. The usefulness of egocentric discussion networks cannot be overstated, especially concerning future research related to public relations. This dissertation serves as a call for communication scholars to utilize this multi-theoretical, multilevel approach. Public relations research can be greatly enriched by such cross-level interaction examinations for better adherence to theoretical underpinnings while still taking

into consideration the myriad of social and conceptual considerations inherent in social relationships.

To conclude, the purpose of this dissertation was to examine how stakeholders' perceptions of sport-related crises were driven by identification and demonstrated by fan behaviors. This research addressed several lingering questions regarding identification's relationship in influencing crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes related to sport crises. By additionally including the assessment of fan behaviors, this dissertation was able to comparatively examine stakeholders' perceptions regarding game outcomes versus sport crises. Findings indicated a similar rivalry propensity existed between these two very different sport-related considerations, and a social identification with sport was indeed an influential driver.

APPENDIX A – SURVEY CODEBOOK

Harker Dissertation Codebook: Egocentric Discussion Network Analysis				
LABEL	TOPIC	QUESTION ASKED OR TEXT STATED	SCALE | MEASURE	SOURCE
01 Introduction | IRB Statement		Consent form will show here.		

IMPORTANT MATTERS DISCUSSION NETWORKS				
A10 Transition to Discussion Networks	Introduction to Discussion Networks portion of the survey	Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. You will now be asked a series of questions. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. This survey will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. It is important you give your full attention to each question. To begin, please click ">>" to the bottom right.	Display text with only a next >> button.	
A20 IM NG	Name Generator: Important Matters QID63	In this first section of this survey, we are interested in the people in your life with whom you talk to about truly important matters. Who are the people you can really count on? Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals with whom you discuss the truly important matters in life.	[5 name slots] In the space below, please write the names of people who you talk with about truly important matters in life. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; PhenX Toolkit, 2016
A21 IM NG Reciprocity	Name Generator: Important Matters	We are also interested in those who seek you out to discuss important matters. Who are the people, whether or not you have listed them before, who always want to talk to you about important matters in life? These	[5 name slots] In the space below, please write the names of people who you talk	Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; PhenX Toolkit, 2016

	QID178	people may be the same or different from those you've listed. Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who discuss their truly important matters in life with you.	with about truly important matters in life. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	
A22 IM NG Burdens	Name Generator: Important Matters QID226	Now, we would like to ask you to think about times when discussions about important matters have felt burdensome. Are there people who are, in general, a burden to you because they want to discuss matters important to them, whether you want them to or not? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed. Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who feel are a burden to you because they want to discuss their truly important matters in life with you.	[5 name slots] In the space below, please write the names of people who you talk with about truly important matters in life. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015; PhenX Toolkit, 2016
A13	If no discussants are listed:	It appears that you did not enter any names on the previous questions. If you cannot think of anyone who you talk to about truly important matters in life OR who talk to you about truly important matters in life, please indicate below. If you have recalled talking with others concerning truly important matters in life, you can use the back "<<" button to review those prior questions.	Respondent can select: I cannot think of anyone who I talked to about truly important matters in life OR anyone who talks to me about truly important matters in life. If selected, respondent skips to the end of the IM block.	

A30 IM Relational data	Role and Relationship	Please identify the nature of your relationship with the people you listed. Please select all that apply. [*You may need to scroll toward the right to view all the options*.]	[matrix table] (1) spouse/partner (2) parent (mother/father) (3) Other family member (sibling, aunt/uncle, In-laws, cousins, etc.) (4) Your child (5) Step-parent (step-mother, step-father) (6) Other step-family members (step-brother, step-sister, etc.) (7) framily (close family friend) (8) friend (9) boss or coworker (10) neighbor (11) online friend (social media, etc.) (12) acquaintance (group member, shop clerk, waitress/waiter, bus or subway passenger - someone you would speak to if you see them) (13) other	Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010
A40 IM Relational data	Communication Frequency	Please indicate how frequently you are in contact with each person listed, on a scale from (1) almost never to (7) very often.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
A60 IM Relational data	Relationship Closeness	Now, please indicate how close you are to each person listed on a scale from (1) not a close relationship at all to (7) a strong close relationship.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not close to close	

A70 IM Relational data	Time known	Please enter the number of years you have known each person you've listed. If you have not yet known them for a full year, please enter "0". Please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value.	[text entry] Years Known:	
A80 IM Attribute Data	Age	Please identify the age of each person you've listed. If you do not know their exact age, please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value.	Please enter numerical age in years from most recent birthday: [text entry]	
A90 IM Attribute Data	Gender	Please identify the gender of each person you listed.	[Select one] Male Female	
A100 IM Attribute Data	Ethnicity	Please identify the ethnicity of the people you listed. Check all that apply under the "Ethnicity" column.	Click all that apply: White/Caucasian African American Hispanic or Latino Asian Other	
A110 IM Attribute Data	Political Ideology	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political ideology.	[Select one] Liberal Moderate Conservative	
A120 IM Attribute Data	Political Partisanship	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political partisanship.	[Select one] Democrat Independent | Unaffiliated Republican	
A130 IM Interrelator	Name Interrelator	To the best of your knowledge, please select whether the person listed in the left column knows any of the individuals listed to the right. For example, ${q://QID63/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} is listed in the first row in the column furthest to the left. If ${q://QID63/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows only ${q://QID63/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2}, you would only select ${q://QID63/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2} to the right. But, if ${q://QID63/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows everyone listed to the right, you would select all the persons listed to the right.	Matrix selection	Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013

		Repeat this for each person listed on the left.		

SPORT IDENTIFICATION				
B01	Introduction	Now, we would like to ask you some questions about sport. Please click the next >> button when you are ready to proceed.	Click next >> button.	
B10 Sport ID	Fandom	How much do you agree with the following statements concerning sport?: I have changed my work schedule to accommodate my interest in sport. I would spend all my money on sport if I could. I want everyone to know I am connected to sport. When sport are popular, I feel great. I feel a purposeful connection to sport. I strongly identify with sport. I would devote all my time to sport if I could. I want to be friends with others who also enjoy sport.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] do not at all agree (1) – to – very much agree (7)	Reysen & Branscombe 2010
B20 Sport ID	Simple Sports fan	How much would you say you are a fan of sport?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all (1) – to – very much (7)	End et al., 2003
B21_1 Sport Involvement	Time Consuming Sport	Please think about the amount of time do you spend consuming sport. Please enter the average number of hours per week you spend consuming sport:	[text entry]	Brown 2015; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Moyer-Guse, 2015, 2008; Swanson et al., 2003
B21_2 Sport Involvement	Time Consuming NFL	Now, please enter the average number of hours per week you spend consuming the NFL, specifically:	[text entry]	Brown 2015; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Moyer-

				Guse, 2015, 2008; Swanson et al., 2003
B22		Have you ever participated in fantasy sport?	(1) Yes (0) No	
B23		Have you ever participated in fantasy football?	(1) Yes (0) No	Spinda, 2011
B24	NFL Surveillance	How often do you participate in fantasy football?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] never (1) – to – frequently (7)	Spinda, 2011
B30 Sport ID	NFL Identification and Involvement | Favorite NFL Team	Which NFL team is your favorite?	[Dropdown menu of 32 teams] Arizona Cardinals (1) Atlanta Falcons (2) Baltimore Ravens (3) Buffalo Bills (4) Carolina Panthers (5) Chicago Bears (6) Cincinnati Bengals (7) Cleveland Browns (8) Dallas Cowboys (9) Denver Broncos (10) Detroit Lions (11) Green Bay Packers (12) Houston Texans (13) Indianapolis Colts (14) Jacksonville Jaguars (15) Kansas City Chiefs (16) Los Angeles Chargers (17) Los Angeles Rams (18)	Kim & Trail, 2010; Spinda, 2011

			Miami Dolphins (19) Minnesota Vikings (20) New England Patriots (21) New Orleans Saints (22) New York Giants (23) New York Jets (24) Oakland Raiders (25) Philadelphia Eagles (26) Pittsburgh Steelers (27) San Francisco 49ers (28) Seattle Seahawks (29) Tampa Bay Buccaneers (30) Tennessee Titans (31) Washington Redskins (32) No favorite NFL team (33)	
B40 Sport ID	NFL Fanship | Team Identification	How much do the following statements reflect your personal feelings about your favorite NFL team? Please rate each item from (1) not at all to (7) very much. How important is it to you that the [favorite NFL team] win? How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of [favorite NFL team]? How closely do you follow (via news, social media, etc.,) [favorite NFL team]? How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of [favorite NFL team]? How important is being a fan of [favorite NFL team]? How much do you dislike [favorite NFL team]'s rivals? How much do you display [favorite NFL team]'s name/logo where you live/work or on your clothing?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all (1) – to – very much (7)	Wann & Branscombe, 1993

B41 Sport ID	General Sport Fanship | Team Identification	Please think for a moment about your favorite sport team. How much do the following statements reflect your personal feelings about your favorite sport team? Please rate each item from (1) not at all to (7) very much. How important is it to you that your favorite sport team wins? How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your favorite sport team? How closely do you follow via news, social media, etc., your favorite sport team? How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of [favorite NFL team]? How important is being a fan of your favorite sport team? How much do you dislike the rivals of your favorite sport team? How much do you display your favorite sport team's name/logo where you live/work or on your clothing?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all (1) – to – very much (7)	Wann & Branscombe, 1993

FAN BEHAVIORS				
C20 FB - CORFing	NFL Fan Behaviors: Cutting Off Reflective Failure	From (1) being not at all likely to (7) being very likely, how much do the following statements reflect your feelings following wins or losses of [favorite NFL team]?: If [favorite NFL team] WINS a game how likely are you to SEEK OUT sport news and game highlights? If [favorite NFL team] WINS a game how likely are you to AVOID sport news and game highlights? If [favorite NFL team] LOSES a game how likely are you to SEEK OUT sport news and game highlights? If [favorite NFL team] LOSES a game how likely are you to AVOID sport news and game highlights?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very much likely (7)	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990

C21 FB - CORFing	General Sport Fan Behaviors: Cutting Off Reflective Failure	From (1) being not at all likely to (7) being very likely, how much do the following statements reflect your feelings following wins or losses of [favorite NFL team]?: If your favorite sport team WINS a game how likely are you to SEEK OUT sport news and game highlights? If your favorite sport team WINS a game how likely are you to AVOID sport news and game highlights? If your favorite sport team LOSES a game how likely are you to SEEK OUT sport news and game highlights? If your favorite sport team LOSES a game how likely are you to AVOID sport news and game highlights?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very likely (7)	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990
C30 FB - Blasting	NFL Fan Behaviors: Blasting	If the [favorite NFL team] WINS a game, how likely are you to "trash talk" to a fan of the losing team? If the [favorite NFL team] LOSES a game, how likely are you to "trash talk" to a fan of the winning team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very likely (7)	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
C31 FB - Blasting	General Sport Fan Behaviors: Blasting	If your favorite sport team WINS a game, how likely are you to "trash talk" to a fan of the losing team? If your favorite sport team LOSES a game, how likely are you to "trash talk" to a fan of the winning team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very likely (7)	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
C40 FB – Schaden-freude	NFL Fan Behaviors: Schadenfreude	Now, let's talk a little bit more about how you feel concerning NFL game outcomes for a moment. From (1) being not at all likely to (7) being very likely, how much do the following statements reflect your typical personal reactions toward fans of a rival team following a loss to your favorite NFL team?: When a rival team loses to [favorite NFL team], how likely are you to feel HAPPY? When a rival team loses to [favorite NFL team], how likely are you to feel PRIDE? When a rival team loses to [favorite NFL team], how likely are you to	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very likely (7)	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958

		COMMUNICATE FEELINGS OF JOY over that team's misfortune? When a rival team loses to [favorite NFL team], how likely would it be that you would COMMUNICATE FEELINGS OF PRIDE to others about that team's misfortune? When a rival team loses to [favorite NFL team], how likely would it be that you would PERSONALLY INSULT others about their team's misfortune?		
C41 FB – Schaden-freude	General Sport Fan Behaviors: Schadenfreude	Now, let's talk a little bit more about how you feel concerning game outcomes for a moment. From (1) being not at all likely to (7) being very likely, how much do the following statements reflect your typical personal reactions toward fans of a rival team following a loss to your favorite sport team?: When a rival team loses to [favorite sport team], how likely are you to feel HAPPY? When a rival team loses to [favorite sport team], how likely are you to feel PRIDE? When a rival team loses to [favorite sport team], how likely are you to COMMUNICATE FEELINGS OF JOY over that team's misfortune? When a rival team loses to [favorite sport team], how likely would it be that you would COMMUNICATE FEELINGS OF PRIDE to others about that team's misfortune? When a rival team loses to [favorite sport team], how likely would it be that you would PERSONALLY INSULT others about their team's misfortune?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely (1) – to – very likely (7)	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958

SPORT
DISCUSSION NETWORK

D10		Continuing on with the topic of sport, let's talk now about with whom you discuss sport. Following are a few questions about who you seek out to talk about sport and who seeks you out to talk about sport. To continue, please click the next ">>" button.		
D20 SP_NG	Name Generator QID148	We are interested in the people with whom you talk to about SPORT. Who are the people you talk to about sport? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of people who you talk with about sport. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals with whom you discuss sport.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2015; Spinda, 2011
D21 SP_NG_Reciprocity	Name Generator QID293	Now, please think about the people who talk to you about sport whether you want them to or not. Who talks to you about SPORT, whether you want them to or not? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of people who come to you to talk about sport, whether you want them to or not. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who talk to you about sport.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2015; Spinda, 2011
D22 SP_FANS_NG	Name Generator QID445	What about people who are FANS of your favorite sport team. Can you list anyone you have spoken to about sport who is a FAN of your favorite sport team? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of these people you have	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who are fans of your favorite team.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2015; Spinda,

		talked with who are FANS of your favorite sport team. You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.		2011
D23 SP_RIVALS _NG	Name Generator QID446	What about people who are fans of RIVAL teams to your favorite sport team? Can you list anyone you have spoken to in the past month about sport who is a fan of the RIVAL team to your favorite sport team? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of these people you have talked with who are fans of RIVAL teams to your favorite sport team. You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who are RIVAL fans to your favorite team.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2015; Spinda, 2011
D24 Sport_NG_O nline	Name Generator QID296	Finally, what about ONLINE friends or acquaintances such as those in fantasy football leagues, or on social media? Can you please list any online friends or acquaintances to whom you have spoken about sport through any of these channels? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names or screen names of your online friends or acquaintances with whom you have talked about sport. You know them and they know you by sight or by name, but if you do not know that person's real or whole name, please simply list a descriptive word to identify that person (just something you would recognize). You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who are ONLINE friends or acquaintances who you talk to about sport.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2015; Spinda, 2011

		two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.		
D29 SP_NONE		It appears that you did not enter any names on the previous questions. If you cannot think of anyone who you talk to about sport or the NFL, nor anyone who talks to you about sport or the NFL, please indicate so below. If you have recalled talking with others concerning sport or the NFL, you can use the back "<<" button to review those prior questions.	I cannot think of anyone who I talk to, nor anyone who talks to me, about sport nor about the NFL.	
D30 | IM Name Match	Name matching	Now please select which of these individuals you listed on the previous questions who you also listed earlier in the survey. Here are the people you listed earlier in the survey with whom you discuss important matters. Who you talk to about important matters: ${q://QID72/ChoiceGroup/DisplayedChoices} Below are those you've listed with whom you discuss sport and the NFL. Please review the names of the individuals whose names are listed below AND those categorized above. Please drag over any names from the list below that match the people listed above. IMPORTANT: Please keep those you drag over in the same order as the list above. If no names listed below appear in the list above, please do NOT select or drag any names below and advance to the next question by selecting ">>".	Drag names into box *Note: this is to reduce respondent burden in having to repeat demographic data for these alters.	
D40 Interpreter Sport ID	Sport Fan	How much would you say each person listed is a fan of sport? Please indicate how much you perceive each person as not at all a fan of sport (0) to very much a sports	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all a fan –to- very much a fan	End et al., 2003

		fan (6). Please make your best guess for each person listed.		
D45 Interpreter Fav_NFL_Team	Alters' Favorite NFL Team	Please select which NFL team is each person's favorite team. Please make your best guess. Please select an answer from the dropdown list on the right for each person listed on the left.	[Dropdown menu of 32 teams] Arizona Cardinals (1) Atlanta Falcons (2) Baltimore Ravens (3) Buffalo Bills (4) Carolina Panthers (5) Chicago Bears (6) Cincinnati Bengals (7) Cleveland Browns (8) Dallas Cowboys (9) Denver Broncos (10) Detroit Lions (11) Green Bay Packers (12) Houston Texans (13) Indianapolis Colts (14) Jacksonville Jaguars (15) Kansas City Chiefs (16) Los Angeles Chargers (17) Los Angeles Rams (18) Miami Dolphins (19) Minnesota Vikings (20) New England Patriots (21) New Orleans Saints (22) New York Giants (23) New York Jets (24) Oakland Raiders (25) Philadelphia Eagles (26) Pittsburgh Steelers (27) San Francisco 49ers (28) Seattle Seahawks (29) Tampa Bay Buccaneers (30) Tennessee Titans (31) Washington Redskins (32) No favorite NFL team/Not sure (33)	Spinda, 2011
D50.1 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	CORFing	For each of the people you've listed, say how likely the following statement fits your discussions concerning sport, from not at all likely (1) to very likely (7). How likely is each person to SEEK YOU OUT and discuss game news and highlights following a WIN by your favorite sport team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990

D50.2 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	CORFing	How likely is each person to seek you out and discuss game news and highlights following a LOSS by your favorite sport team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990
D60.1 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Blasting	How likely are you to "TRASH TALK" to each person listed following a WIN by your favorite sport team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
D60.2 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Blasting	How likely is each person listed to "TRASH TALK" *to you* following a LOSS by your favorite sport team?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
D70.1 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to communicate FEELINGS OF JOY to each person listed if his/her favorite team loses a game?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958
D70.2 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to communicate FEELINGS OF PRIDE to each person listed if his/her favorite team loses a game?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958
D70.3 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to PERSONALLY INSULT to each person listed if his/her favorite team loses a game?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958
D80.1 SP_Relational data	Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you WATCH sporting events together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
D80.2 SP_Relational data	Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you ATTEND sporting events together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
D80.3 SP_Relational data	Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7).	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	

		How often do you PLAY FANTASY SPORT in the same league together?		
D80.4 SP_Relational data	Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you CHEER FOR THE SAME TEAM with each person listed?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
D80.5 SP_Relational data	Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you TALK about sport together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
D100 SP_Relational data	Communication Frequency	Please indicate how often you are in contact with each person listed, on a scale from (1) almost never to (7) very often.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
D110 SP_Relational data	Relationship Closeness	Now, please indicate the closeness of your relationship with each person listed on a scale from (1) not a close relationship at all to (7) a strong close relationship.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not close –to- close	
D120 SP_Relational data	Role and Relationship	Please identify the nature of your relationship with the people listed. Please select all that apply. You may notice that your list of people is shorter for this question and those that follow. This is because you need only answer these questions for the people who were added in this sport section of the survey from those listed in the important matters section of this survey. [You may need to scroll toward the right to view all the options.] If no names appear on the left, please simply click the next ">>" button to continue.	[matrix table] spouse/partner parent (mother/father) Other family member (sibling, aunt/uncle, In-laws, cousins, etc.) Your child Step-parent (step-mother, step-father) Other step-family members (step-brother, step-sister, etc.) framily (close family friend) friend boss or coworker neighbor online friend (social media,	Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010

			etc.) acquaintance (group member, shop clerk, waitress/waiter, bus or subway passenger - someone you would speak to if you see them) other	
D140 SP_Relational data	Time known	Please enter the number of years you have known each person you've listed. If you have not yet known them for a full year, please enter "0". Please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value. Again, you may notice that your list of people is shorter for this question and those that follow. *If no names are listed here, simply click through by selecting the next >> button.*	[text entry] Enter number of years known	
D150 SP_Attribute data	Age	Please identify the age of each person you listed. If you do not know their exact age, please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value.	[text entry] Please enter numerical age in years from most recent birthday:	
D160 SP_Attribute data	Gender	Please identify the gender of the people you listed. Again, you may notice that your list of people is shorter for this question and those that follow. If no names are listed here, simply click through by selecting the next >> button.	[Select one] Male Female	
D170 SP_Attribute data	Ethnicity	lease identify the ethnicity of the people you listed.	Click all that apply: White/Caucasian African American Hispanic or Latino Asian Other	
D180 SP_Attribute data	Political Ideology	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political ideology.	[Select one] Liberal Moderate Conservative	
D190 SP_Attribute data	Political Partisanship	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political partisanship.	[Select one] Democrat Independent | Unaffiliated Republican	
D200	Name	To the best of your knowledge,	Matrix selection	Borgatti,

SP_Interrelator	Interrelator	please select whether the person listed in the left column knows any of the people listed on the right. For example, ${q://QID148/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} is listed in the first row in the column furthest to the left. If ${q://QID148/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows only ${q://QID148/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2}, you would only select ${q://QID148/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2} to the right. But if ${q://QID148/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows everyone listed to the right, you would select all the persons listed to the right. Repeat this for each person listed on the left.		Everett, & Johnson, 2013

CRISIS PERCEPTIONS				
F01	Crisis Knowledge Introduction	Now, we would like to discuss with you a few events that have occurred involving the NFL. Please click the next >> button when you are ready to proceed.		
F10 CP – Crisis in the NFL	Crisis Knowledge: Four highly mediated/legal cases.	Have you ever heard of any of the following incidents involving the NFL? (1) Concussions | Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) - CTE is a brain degeneration disease associated with repeated head trauma. CTE has been noted to occur at higher rates among NFL players. (2) Deflategate: Tom Brady and the New England Patriots were accused in 2015 of deflating footballs. (3) Ezekiel Elliot: Elliot, a Dallas Cowboys running back, was suspended for six games for a domestic assault accusation in 2016 and repeatedly appealed his suspension during the 2017 season. (4) Colin Kaepernick | #TakeaKnee: NFL players protesting throughout the	Please select ALL incidents you have heard about. Below is a mention of domestic assault incidents that occurred involving two NFL players that could trigger an emotional response for some individuals. If this occurs, we recommend you reach out to your healthcare provider. Also offered: I have never heard of any of these incidents.	

		2017 season by kneeling during the national anthem.		
F11		Of those incidents you have heard about, have you ever talked about or posted about or shared online any of these incidents with anyone?	Yes No	
F11.2		It appears that you did not select any of the listed incidents that have occurred involving the NFL. You can use the back << button to review the incidents if you wish. Otherwise, please indicate below if you cannot recall hearing about OR talking about any of the incidents.	I cannot think of any time in the past that I have heard about any of the four listed incidents OR a time that I have talked to anyone about any of the four incidents. If selected, respondent skips to demographic questions and then end of survey.	
F11.3		You selected the following incidents as those you have heard about. Now, please select which of these incidents you might have *talked about* or *posted about* or *shared online*. Please select all that apply.	(1) Concussions | CTE (2) Deflategate | Tom Brady (3) Ezekiel Elliot | Domestic Assault (4) Colin Kaepernick | #TakeaKnee	
F12		Of these NFL-related incidents you have heard about and talked about, or posted or shared online, please select the ONE incident you have discussed the most with others:	(1) Concussions | CTE (2) Deflategate | Tom Brady (3) Ezekiel Elliot | Domestic Assault (4) Colin Kaepernick | #TakeaKnee	
F19		Please express your feelings concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. At which level would you be most likely to place the blame for the incident? Is the LEAGUE mostly to blame for the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? or Is the TEAM mostly to blame for the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? or	Please select one: (1) League (2) Team (3) Athlete	

		Is the ATHLETE mostly to blame for the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?		
F20 Blame Attribution	This question measures at selected level: league | team | athlete.	Now, we wish to ask you a few questions concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident at the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} level of the NFL. Please express your feelings concerning how much the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} is to blame for the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, from (1) do not blame at all to (7) very much blame? Please express how much you blame the [league | team | athlete] for this crisis:	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] do not blame at all (1) – to – very much blame (7)	Coombs, 2007a, 2007b, 1995
F30 Crisis Responsibility	1st Factor: Crisis Perceptions Each of these questions measure at selected level: league | team | athlete.	How much evidence was there at the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} level of the NFL that the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident occurred, from (1) being little or no evidence to (7) being a lot of evidence? How much evidence is there that [the league | the team | the athlete] carried out this incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] little or no evidence – to – a lot of evidence	Coombs, 2007, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Heider, 1958; Weiner, 2008, 1986
F31 Crisis Responsibility	1st Factor: Crisis Perceptions Each of these questions measure at selected level: league | team | athlete.	Please express your perception for how much the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident was caused by an internal source (1) or an external source (7) at the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} level: How much do you perceive the incident to be internally or externally triggered at [the league | the team | the athlete] level?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] internal – to – external REVERSE CODE THIS ONE!	Coombs, 2007, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Heider, 1958; Weiner, 2008, 1986
F32 Crisis Responsibility	1st Factor: Crisis Perceptions Each of these Each of these questions measure at selected level: league | team |	How much do you perceive the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident to have been accidental or intentional at the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} level? How much do you perceive this	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] accidental – to – intentional	Coombs, 2007, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Heider, 1958; Weiner, 2008, 1986

	athlete.	incident to be accidental or intentional at [the league | the team | the athlete] level?		
F40 Crisis History	2nd Factor: Crisis Perceptions	HOW OFTEN do you think incidents such as the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident occurs in the NFL at the [league | team | athlete] level?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] a one-time event to one in a series of events	Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2008, 1996
F50 [Past] Reputation and Relationship	3rd Factor: Crisis Perception	How much do you (1) disagree or (7) agree with the following statements about the NFL pertaining to the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? The [league | team | individual] is concerned with the wellbeing of its publics. The [league | team | individual] is basically dishonest. I do not trust the [league | team | individual] to tell the truth about the incident. Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the [league | team | individual] says. The [league | team | individual] is not concerned with the wellbeing of its publics.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] strongly disagree (1) – to – strongly agree (7)	Coombs, 2014, 2007a, 2004, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2009, 2002, 1996; Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016
F60 Sport Crisis Perceptions - Emotion	Emotional response to crisis.	Now, please select *which emotion*, if any, you felt concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident at the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} level? When I first heard about the incident, I felt… When I heard about the related to suspension, I felt… When I heard about the legal troubles related to the incident… When I heard about loss of sponsors because of the incident, I felt…	[dropdown list] (1) Sympathy (2) Anger (3) Joy (0) None of These/Not Aware of This	Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012

SPORT CRISIS DISCUSSION NETWORK				
G01	Introduction	Continuing on with the topic of the incidents that have occurred in the NFL, let's finally talk about to whom you might have discussed these incidents. Please click the next >> button when you are ready to proceed.		
G10 Crisis_NG	Name Generator QID326	Recall earlier in the survey when you answered that you have talked the most about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. The ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident will remain the focus of this last section of this survey. Think of the people to whom you have talked about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, specifically. These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of people who you talked with about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals with whom you've discussed the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Spinda, 2011
G11 Crisis_reciprocity_NG	Name Generator QID327	Who talks to you about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, specifically, whether you want them to or not. These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of people who come to you to talk about	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who have discussed the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident with you.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Spinda, 2011

		the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, whether you want them to or not. You can write their nicknames or their first names or their initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.		
G13 Crisis_FAN_NG	Name Generator QID329	What about people who are FANS of a team or athlete implicated in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. Can you list anyone you have spoken to about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident who is a FAN of the team(s) or athlete(s) connected to the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of the people you have talked with who are FANS of any team or athlete connected to the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of the individuals who are FANS of the team or athlete implicated in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Spinda, 2011
G14 Crisis_Rivals_NG	Name Generator QID330	What about people who are fans of RIVAL teams to the team(s) or athlete(s) connected to the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? Can you list anyone you have spoken to about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident who is a fan of a RIVAL team or athlete? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of these people you have talked with who are RIVALS to any team or athlete connected to the	[5 name slots] Please list up as many names as necessary of the individuals who are fans of RIVAL teams to the team(s) or athlete(s) implicated in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident.	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Spinda, 2011

		${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.		
G15 Crisis_Online_NG	Name Generator QID331	Finally, what about online friends or acquaintances such as those in fantasy football leagues or on social media? Can you please list any online friends or acquaintances to whom you have spoken about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? These people may be the same or different from those you've listed earlier in this survey. In the space below, please write the names of your ONLINE friends or acquaintances who you have talked with about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. You know them and they know you by sight or by name, but if you do not know that person's real or whole name, please simply list a descriptive word to identify that person (just something you would recognize). You can write nicknames or first names or initials. If two people have the same first name, please use the first letter of each person's last name to differentiate the two. Please do not enter any person's full last name. Please do not type in *n/a* or *none*.	[5 name slots] Please list as many names as necessary of any ONLINE friends or acquaintances with whom you discussed the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	Borgatti et al., 2013, p. 264; Bush et al., 2017; Cialdini et al., 1976; McCarty et al., 2007; Spinda, 2011
G16 Crisis_NG_None		It appears that you did not enter any names on the previous questions. If you cannot think of anyone who you have talked to about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident involving the NFL, nor anyone who has talked to you about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, please indicate so below. If you have recalled talking with others concerning the	I cannot think of anyone who I talk to, nor anyone who talks to me, about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident that occurred involving the NFL.	

		${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, you can use the back "<<" button to review your prior responses.	
G30.1 Crisis_IM_NG_Matching	Name Matching - IM	Now, we need you to select the individuals with whom you discussed important matters. Here are their names: ${q://QID72/ChoiceGroup/DisplayedChoices} Below are those you've listed with whom you discuss the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. Please review the names listed below. Drag over only the names listed below that appear on the list above. IMPORTANT: Please keep those you drag over in the same order as the list above. For example, if ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} is also listed above, you would drag over that person's name to the "Discuss Important Matters With" box on the right. If no names listed below appear in the list above, please do NOT select or drag any names and advance to the next question by selecting the next ">>" button.	Drag names into box *Note: Again, this is to reduce respondent burden in not having to repeat demographic data for these alters.
G30.2 Crisis_SP_NG_Matching	Name Matching - SP	Now, we need you to select the individuals you listed earlier with whom you discuss sport. Here are their names: ${q://QID186/ChoiceGroup/DisplayedChoices} Below are those you've listed with whom you discuss the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident. Please review the names listed below. Drag over only the names listed below that appear on the list above.	Drag names into box *Note: Again, this is to reduce respondent burden in not having to repeat demographic data for these alters.

		IMPORTANT: Please keep those you drag over in the same order as the list above. For example, if ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} is also listed above, you would drag over that person's name to the "Discuss Sport With" box on the right. If no names listed below appear in the list above, please do NOT select or drag any names and advance to the next question by selecting the next ">>" button.		
G60.2 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	CORFing	For each of the people you've listed, say how likely the following statement fits your discussions concerning sport, from not at all likely (1) to very likely (7). How likely is each person to SEEK YOU OUT to discuss news or updates concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990
G60.3 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	CORFing	How likely is each person to AVOID discussing news or updates concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, from not at all likely (1) to very likely (7)?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Spinda, 2011; Wann & Branscombe, 1990
G70.1 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Blasting	How likely are you to "TRASH TALK" to each person listed concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
G70.2 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Blasting	How likely is each person to "TRASH TALK" to you concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Spinda, 2011
G80.3 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to communicate FEELINGS OF JOY concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident to each person listed?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958
G80.1 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to communicate FEELINGS OF PRIDE to each person listed concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider,

				1958
G80.4 Interrelator Fan Behaviors	Schadenfreude	How likely are you to PERSONALLY INSULT each person listed concerning the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all likely –to- very likely	Cikara et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2015, 2003; Leach and Fiske, 2009; Heider, 1958
G55 Crisis Perception	Blame Attribution	How much blame do you think each person placed on the ${q://QID451/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} associated with the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] LEAGUE TEAM ATHLETE do not blame at all – to – very much blame	Coombs, 2007a, 2007b, 1995
G90.1 Sport Crisis Perceptions - Emotion	Emotional response to crisis.	You are nearly finished completing this survey. Just a few more questions and then we will wrap up, but first, we would like to ask you just a few questions about how much sympathy or anger or joy each person might have expressed during your conversations about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident? When you and each person listed below talked about the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, did s/he express *overall feelings of* (please select one):	[dropdown list] (1) Sympathy (2) Anger (3) Joy (0) None of These/Not Aware of This	Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012
G90.2 Sport Crisis Perceptions - Emotion	Emotional response to crisis.	When you and each person listed below talked about the related player SUSPENSION in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, did s/he express feelings of (please select one):	[dropdown list] (1) Sympathy (2) Anger (3) Joy (0) None of These/Not Aware of This	Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012
G90.3 Sport Crisis Perceptions - Emotion	Emotional response to crisis.	When you and each person listed below talked about the related LEGAL TROUBLES in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, did s/he express feelings of (please select one):	[dropdown list] (1) Sympathy (2) Anger (3) Joy (0) None of These/Not Aware of This	Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012
G90.4 Sport Crisis Perceptions - Emotion	Emotional response to crisis.	When you and each person listed below talked about the related LOSS OF SPONSORS in the ${q://QID306/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices} incident, did s/he express feelings of (please select one):	[dropdown list] (1) Sympathy (2) Anger (3) Joy (0) None of These/Not Aware of This	Coombs, 2007a; Dalakas & Phillips Melancon, 2012

G40 Crisis_ Interpreter	Sport Fan	How much would you say each person listed is a fan of sport? Please indicate how much you perceive each person as not at all a fan of sport (0) to very much a sports fan (6). Please make your best guess for each person listed.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all a fan –to- very much a fan	End et al., 2003
G50 Crisis_ Interpreter	Alters Favorite NFL Team	Please select which NFL team is [this alter]'s favorite team?	[Dropdown menu of 32 teams] Arizona Cardinals (1) Atlanta Falcons (2) Baltimore Ravens (3) Buffalo Bills (4) Carolina Panthers (5) Chicago Bears (6) Cincinnati Bengals (7) Cleveland Browns (8) Dallas Cowboys (9) Denver Broncos (10) Detroit Lions (11) Green Bay Packers (12) Houston Texans (13) Indianapolis Colts (14) Jacksonville Jaguars (15) Kansas City Chiefs (16) Los Angeles Chargers (17) Los Angeles Rams (18) Miami Dolphins (19) Minnesota Vikings (20) New England Patriots (21) New Orleans Saints (22) New York Giants (23) New York Jets (24) Oakland Raiders (25) Philadelphia Eagles (26) Pittsburgh Steelers (27) San Francisco 49ers (28) Seattle Seahawks (29) Tampa Bay Buccaneers (30) Tennessee Titans (31) Washington Redskins (32) No favorite NFL team/Not sure(33)	Spinda, 2011
G100.1 Crisis_SP_Relational data	Crisis/Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you WATCH sporting events together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
G100.2 Crisis_SP_Relational	Crisis/Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale]	

data		almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you ATTEND sporting events together?	almost never –to- very often	
G100.3 Crisis_SP_Relational data	Crisis/Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you PLAY FANTASY SPORT in the same league together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
G100.4 Crisis_SP_Relational data	Crisis/Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you CHEER FOR THE SAME TEAM with each person listed?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
G100.5 Crisis_SP_Relational data	Crisis/Sport Relationship Closeness	Say how often you and each person listed participate in the following sport-related activities together, from almost never (1) to very often (7). How often do you TALK about sport together?	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
G120 Relational data	Communication Frequency	Please indicate how frequently you are in contact with each person listed, on a scale from (1) almost never to (7) very often.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] almost never –to- very often	
G150 Relational data	Relationship Closeness	Please indicate how close you are to each person listed on a scale from (1) not a close relationship at all to (7) a strong close relationship.	[7-point continuous bi-polar scale] not at all close to very close	
G110 Relational data	Role and Relationship	Please identify the nature of your relationship with the people listed. You may notice that your list of people is slightly shorter for this question and those that follow. This is because you need only answer these questions for the people who were newly listed in this section of the survey. [You may need to scroll toward the right to view all the options.]	[matrix table] Please select all that apply. spouse/partner parent (mother/father) Other family member (sibling, aunt/uncle, In-laws, cousins, etc.) Your child Step-parent (step-mother, step-father) Other step-family members (step-brother, step-sister, etc.)	Bush et al., 2017; Marsden, 1987; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015, 2010

			framily (close family friend) friend boss or coworker neighbor online friend (social media, etc.) acquaintance (group member, shop clerk, waitress/waiter, bus or subway passenger - someone you would speak to if you see them) other
G160 Relational data	Time known	Please enter the number of years you have known each person you've listed. If you have not yet known them for a full year, please enter "0". Please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value.	[text entry] Years Known:
G170 Attribute data	Age	Please identify the age of each person you listed in the previous questions. If you do not know their exact age, please give the best estimate. Please enter a numeric value.	[Text entry] Please enter numerical age in years from most recent birthday.
G180 Attribute data	Gender	Please identify the gender of the people you listed.	[Select one] Male Female Don't want to answer
G190 Attribute data	Ethnicity	Please identify the ethnicity of the people you listed. Check all that apply. Please answer for every person listed by making your best guess.	Click all that apply: White/Caucasian African American Hispanic or Latino Asian Other
G220 Attribute data	Political Ideology	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political ideology.	[Select one] Liberal Moderate Conservative
G230 Attribute data	Political Partisanship	Please make your best guess concerning each person's political partisanship.	[Select one] Democrat Independent | Unaffiliated Republican

G240 Crisis_Interrelator	Name Interrelator	To the best of your knowledge, please select whether the person listed in the left column knows *any* of the people listed on the right. For example, ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} is listed in the first row in the column furthest to the left. If ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows only ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2} you would only select ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/2} to the right. But if ${q://QID326/ChoiceTextEntryValue/1} knows everyone listed to the right, you would select all the persons listed to the right. Repeat this for each person listed on the left.	Matrix selection	Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013

		DEMOGRAPHICS	
H10	Transition to Demographics	Thank you for filling out this survey to this point. In this final section, we would like to ask you a few details about yourself. Please click the next >>> button to proceed and finish this survey.	
H20	Age	What is your current age?	Please enter numerical age in years from most recent birthday: [text entry]
H30	Gender	What was your gender at birth?	[Select one] 1Male 2Female 0Don't want to answer
H40	Ethnicity	Please share your ethnicity?	Click all that apply: 1White/Caucasian 2African American 3Hispanic or Latino 4Asian 5Other
H50	Education	Please select your level of education by selecting your last year completed:	[Select one] 1less than HS 2HS grad or GED 3Some college or technical school

			4Associate's degree 5Bachelor's degree 6Graduate or professional school
H60	Annual Income	Please select your total annual household income:	[Select one] 1up to 40K 2$40K-$60K 3$60K-$80K 4$80K-$100K 5$100K-$150K 6$150K-$200K 7$200K+
H70	Political Ideology	Please select which description best matches your political ideology:	[Select one] 1Liberal 2Moderate 3Conservative
H80	Political Partisanship	Please select which description best matches your political partisanship:	[Select one] 1Democrat 2Independent | Unaffiliated 3Republican
I10		The survey is now complete. Thank you for participating in the study. If you would like to contact the researchers, please send an email to jlharker@live.unc.edu. Again, thank you for your time.	

APPENDIX B – CONTEXT OVERVIEW OF FOUR NFL CRISES CASE STUDIES

1.) Concussions | Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)

CTE is a brain degeneration disease associated with repeated head trauma. CTE has been noted to occur at higher rates among NFL players.

2.) Tom Brady | Deflategate

Tom Brady and the New England Patriots were accused in 2015 of deflating footballs.

3.) Ezekiel Elliot | Domestic assault

Elliot, a Dallas Cowboys running back, was suspended for six games for a domestic assault accusation in 2016 and repeatedly appealed his suspension during the 2017 season.

4.) Colin Kaepernick or #TakeaKnee

NFL players protesting throughout the 2017 season by kneeling during the national anthem.

APPENDIX C – SCALE CREATION FOR STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS AND SPORT IDENTIFICATION

This appendix features the reliability, validity, and consistency of the measures for stakeholders' perceptions and sport identification.

CRISIS PERCEPTIONS: A series of factor analyses were conducted on all of these crisis perceptions measurements at each level (the league level, the team level, and the athlete level, respectively). This was conducted in an effort to create an overall crisis perceptions scale to use as a seminal dependent variable for this research. The measures entered into each level's factor analysis included the amount of blame, amount of evidence, internal/external cause, accidental/intentional, and crisis history perceptions.

At the league level (KMO = .78, $p < .001$, $df = 10$), the five items loaded on one factor with principal axis factoring ranging from .49 to .68 and 34% of the variance explained. At the team level (KMO = .76, $p < .001$, $df = 10$), the five items loaded on one factor with principal axis factoring ranging from .40 to .93 and 48% of the variance explained. At the athlete level (KMO = .76, $p < .001$, $df = 10$), the five items loaded on one factor with principal axis factoring ranging from .24 (the internal or external measure) to .83 and 41% of the variance explained. The factor analyses results were not stellar but passable enough to explore internal consistency to determine whether the items should be combined to create an overall scale.

The five crisis perceptions were analyzed for internal consistency. Cronbach's alphas consistently showed the internal/external measurement item to be statistically inconsistent from the other measurements. This likely can be explained by the fact that the internal to external

measure was captured in an opposite direction from the other measurements. To explain, each of the scales reflected incremental increases in negative perceptions but the internal to external reflected incremental increases in positive perceptions because an external crisis source relieves the amount of crisis attribution placed on the individual or entity experiencing the crisis, whereas an internal crisis would be more negative yet was scaled at the lowest end. The item was therefore reverse coded to match the other measurements but still consistency was not achieved. The internal or external impetus measure was resultantly dropped from subsequent analyses because of this continued inconsistency. The remaining four crisis perceptions measurements showed acceptable internal consistency across all three respective levels: league (a = .70), team (a = .82), and athlete (a = .79).

REPUTATIONAL OUTCOMES: The first and third measures were therefore removed, and the remaining three items ("*The [league | team | individual] is basically DISHONEST," "I do NOT trust the [league | team | individual] to tell the truth about the incident*," and "*The [league | team | individual] is NOT concerned with the wellbeing of its publics*.") resulted in the following final factor analysis results: League level: KMO = .69, $p < .001$, $df = 3$, principal axis factoring ranged from .67 to .93 and all loading on one factor explaining 68% of the variance; Team level: KMO = .70, $p < .001$, $df = 3$, principal axis factoring ranged from .69 to .91 and all loading on one factor explaining 69% of the variance; and at the Athlete level: KMO = .70, $p < .001$, $df = 3$, principal axis factoring ranged from .69 to .92 and all loading on one factor explaining 70% of the variance. Cronbach's alphas by level of measurement were also acceptable after removing those two items: league (a = .85), team (a = .86), and athlete (a = .87).

CRISIS PERCEPTIONS AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES OF REPUTATIONAL OUTCOMES: TESTING FOR THEORETICAL CONSISTENCY. The stakeholders' perceptions—crisis perceptions and reputational outcomes—are seminal dependent variables in this research. For that reason, the theoretical soundness of the scales was tested by conducting a series of simple linear regressions at each level (league, team, athlete). These analyses examined whether the theoretical premise of crisis perceptions as antecedents to reputational outcomes holds true for the resultant scales. For the league level ($F(8, 413) = 10.53$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .17$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .16$), crisis perceptions ($\beta = .403$, $t(413) = 8.50$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictor variables, and the data met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.94). For the team level ($F(8, 129) = 14.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .49$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .46$), crisis perceptions ($\beta = .662$, $t(129) = 9.76$, $p < .001$) were again significant positive predictor variables (Durbin-Watson value = 1.54), and again for the athlete level ($F(8, 481) = 11.82$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .17$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .15$), crisis perceptions ($\beta = .316$, $t(481) = 6.97$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictor variables, with data meeting the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.90). All three of the regression analyses controlled for demographics. The only significant demographic predictor variable for reputational outcomes was respondent income ($\beta = .054$, $t(481) = 1.96$, $p < .05$), but only at the league level.

SCALE CREATION OF IDENTIFICATION MEASURES. A factor analysis was conducted to test the fandom and fanship measures for any overlap of factor loadings (see Table 3.6). Overall, the factor analysis (KMO = .95, $p < .001$, $df = 105$) of all fifteen items created two models accounting for 55% and 69% of the variance, cumulative. The promax rotation clearly separated the fandom measurements from the fanship measurements with principal axis factors ranging from .70 to .89 for fandom and .61 to .91 for fanship. Cronbach's alphas were then

assessed to test the internal consistency of the fandom measures (a = .95) and the fanship measures (a = .93). Resultantly, the items were transformed into scales for each sport identification measurement: the fandom scale (n = 1,100, M = 3.28, SD = 1.78) and the fanship scale (n = 990, M = 4.80, SD = 1.61).

The factor loadings significance was decided at the .60 level. This significance level was decided upon by applying a series of considerations defined by Carpenter (2018), which include (in order of importance): theoretical adherence, communalities, significance of loadings, and reliability levels such as overall KMO, and then internal reliability of the selected items. The following Table 3.6 shows the factors cross-loaded under the .60 significance level but theoretical adherence, combined with the other aforementioned statistical components, ultimately left the two factor clearly defined (e.g. fandom as a social identity and fanship as an individual, team identity).

Table 3.6. *Factor Analyses of Fandom and Fanship Measures*

	Factor 1	Factor 2
FANDOM5	0.89	0.54
FANDOM3	0.89	0.52
FANDOM4	0.87	0.56
FANDOM6	0.87	0.58
FANDOM7	0.84	0.45
FANDOM8	0.79	0.55
FANDOM2	0.74	0.38
FANDOM1	0.70	0.37
Fanship5	0.55	0.91
Fanship4	0.52	0.90
Fanship2	0.47	0.89
Fanship3	0.52	0.85
Fanship1	0.43	0.84
Fanship7	0.51	0.76
Fanship6	0.49	0.61

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

APPENDIX D – SPORT INTERRELATOR

To further examine the interrelation of sport communication between egos and their alters in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks, a sport interrelator was developed. A five-item sport interrelator scale was created to measure the strength of sport-related ties between egos and their listed alters. There are specific others egos reach to for discussing sport and sport crises, but this research also investigated whether and to what degree egos reach to those with whom they typically co-consume sport for such discussions. People watch sport together and they talk about sport together (Wenner & Gantz, 1998). So, tandem sport engagement—or sport co-consumption—with any one alter is a critical tie to capture when examining sport-specific egocentric communication. The sport interrelator tie created, tested, and scaled in this dissertation was measured for these reasons.

This scale was measured in both the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network. The five items rate co-consumption of sport between the ego and each of his/her alters. The items were scaled on seven-point bipolar scales and asked how often the ego and alter *watch* sport together (M = 3.88, SD = 2.22), *attend* sporting events together (M = 3.14, SD = 2.23), *play fantasy football* together (M = 3.00, SD = 2.46), *cheer* for the same team together (M = 4.65, SD = 2.24), and *talk* about sport together (M = 4.87, SD = 1.97). All five items loaded on one factor (PCA ranged from .640 to .861) to explain 58.2% of the variance (KMO = .80 $p < .001$, $df = 10$). Internal reliability was acceptable (a = .81), therefore the *sport interrelator* composite scale was established (n = 2,497, M = 3.91, SD = 1.68). The sport interrelator tie was stronger in the sport discussion network (n = 1,248, M = 4.17, SD = 1.59) than in the sport crisis discussion network (n = 1,249, M = 3.65, SD = 1.73).

An important aside concerning one item in this interrelator must be addressed. The lowest-scoring (.640) component in the factor analysis was, "*how often do you play fantasy football together*?" This question was only asked to those who reported earlier in the survey that they themselves engaged with fantasy football, therefore cutting dramatically the number of total sport interrelator tie responses (n = 5,842). However, both the factor analysis and the Cronbach's alpha were weakened when excluding the fantasy football variable, and more importantly, the inclusion of those who engage in fantasy football together reflects those more engaged with the NFL and therefore offered a more heavily-weighted measurement of stakeholders—which arguably best fits the focus of this dissertation. For these reasons, the benefits of including the fantasy football item outweighed the loss of the number of alters included in the composite scale.

A simple Pearson's correlation was conducted to explore an initial test of association between the sport interrelator tie and alters' fan level. The sport interrelator tie significantly moderately correlated with the fan levels of alters (r = .433, p < .01), overall. This means that perceived higher fan levels correlated with how often an ego co-consumed sport with an alter. The sport interrelator tie is additionally explored in $RQ5_b$, later. For now, RQ5a is addressed in the next portion of these tie selection findings.

Following are the results from conducting a MLM regression analysis for the likelihood of network and ego variables to activate the sport interrelator tie in the sport and sport crisis discussion networks. Fandom and the alter being perceived as a fan of sport are two likely antecedents in both ego networks, and fanship is a significant antecedent for the tie activation of co-consumption of sport with sport crisis discussants. This sport interrelator is a significant contribution to the future research of sport-related discussion networks.

Table 5.1. *Multilevel Modeling for Sport Interrelator Activation in Sport Discussion Network Compared to Sport Crisis Discussion Network*

	Sport Discussion Network Sport Interrelator		**Sport Crisis Discussion Network Sport Interrelator**	
	Point Estimate	(SE)	Point Estimate	(SE)
n =	1052		1047	
Ego Attributes				
Age	-0.01	0.00	**-0.01*** **	0.00
Gender	-0.03	0.14	**0.24***	0.12
Ethnicity[a]	**-0.65*** **	0.16	-0.16	0.15
Ideology[a]	-0.22	0.17	-0.03	0.15
Partisanship[a]	0.18	0.16	0.04	0.15
Alter Attributes				
Age	**-0.01****	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gender	-0.04	0.07	0.05	0.07
Ethnicity[a]	0.23*	0.10	0.15	0.10
Ideology[a]	-0.07	0.08	0.04	0.09
Partisanship[a]	0.04	0.08	-0.13	0.09
Role | Relationship				
Family	0.39	0.29	-0.04	0.22
Friends	0.28	0.28	-0.37	0.22
Multiplex	0.35	0.31	-0.20	0.24
Proximal	0.06	0.31	**-0.95*** **	0.26
Online Friend	0.20	0.35	-0.50	0.30
Relational Ties				
Comm freq.	**0.30*** **	0.03	**0.22*** **	0.03
Closeness	**0.14*** **	0.03	**0.16*** **	0.03
Time known	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sport-specific Attributes of Ego | Alter				
Alter is a fan	**0.19*** **	0.03	**0.29*** **	0.02
FANDOM	**0.25*** **	0.04	**0.18*** **	0.04
FANSHIP	0.06	0.05	**0.14*** **	0.04
FanTeam/Athlete	0.02	0.09	-0.08	0.12
RivalTeam/Athlete	**-0.49*** **	0.10	-0.03	0.10
BIC		(-1153.69)		(-1274.64)
(Deviance from null model)	2938.79		3087.99	
ICC (*model sig.)	53%***		55%***	

Model significance: * = $p<.05$, ** = $p<.01$, *** = $p<.001$
ICC = within and between variance calculated. ICC means the % *unexplained* for DV by model components.

APPENDIX E – STRUCTURAL HOLES MEASUREMENT

The strength of relational ties also aids in reporting network cohesiveness measures like degree centrality (the average number of alters who knew each other in each ego's network) and density (the number of connections actually made among all possible connections). Cohesiveness is a structural holes measure in egocentric network research that helps discern brokerage opportunities, or in this research's overall premise, access to influential communication (Burt, 2004, 1992; Granovetter, 1973). E-NET's structural holes analyses is based upon the combination of the strength of a relational tie and the number of connections within the ego's network that could be involved with that relational tie activation. Each discussion network was assessed with this structural holes measurement by examining the strength of the communication frequency relational tie. Access and activation to unique or diverse information comes from less densely connected networks and alternatively, a more dense or closed personal network features an agreeable, homogeneous environment with less access to new or discordant information. Structural holes are calculated by assessing several network statistics including effective size, efficiency, constraint, and density.

The average degree centrality for the important matters discussion network was 5.01, which means on average five of the egos' alters reportedly knew each other. Density is measured on a 0-1 scale with 1 being a denser network (or more actual connections). The important matters discussion network's average density was .59 (or 59%).

Each of these findings in the differences between the three discussion networks was further supported by the overall egocentric network structural holes results (see Table 5.2). Halgin & Borgatti (2012) explained the statistical outcomes of Burt's (2004, 1992) structural holes phenomena by separating out each of the four results measures: density, constraint,

effective size, and efficiency. Egos who enjoy maximum brokerage opportunities and possess the most access to a diverse mix of information are egos with networks that feature low density and constraint, and high effective size and efficiency. Alternatively, egos with a closed personal network, as indicated by high density and constraint, and low effective size and efficiency, have less access to unique or influential communication, information, or resources. A closed personal network, where density is higher and more alters know each other (such as in the important matters discussion network), equates the sharing of mostly redundant information, resulting in less access to new ideas and an even lesser exchange of discordant communication.

Table 5.2. *Structural Holes Statistics for Communication Frequency in All Three Egocentric Discussion Networks*

	IM	SP	SC
Degree	5.01	4.62	2.42
Density	0.59	0.45	0.40
Effective Size	4.22	4.02	2.09
Efficiency	0.84	0.87	0.61
Constraint	0.46	0.49	0.42
Hierarchy	0.05	0.11	0.12

The structural holes statistic is conducted by analyzing the strength of a particular tie that each ego shares with each alter in his/her network. The tie utilized to compare structural holes related to communication within each of the three discussion networks was communication frequency. Egos were asked how often they communicate with each alter about important matters, sport, or sport crises. The structural holes results indicate that the sport crisis discussion network depicts more closed personal networks than the sport discussion network, but both sport-related discussion networks possessed more access to unique information than the important matters discussion network.

A second structural holes test was conducted in each of the two sport-related discussion networks. This time the structural holes analysis focused on the tie capture in the sport discussion

network and the sport crisis discussion network that asked how often egos "talk together about sport" with each of their alters. Results indicate that the sport discussion network is more densely connected but egos in the sport discussion network are more constrained by certain alters than egos in the sport crisis discussion network when it comes to talking about sport. Just knowing and citing these statistical results leaves assumptions premature to broadly or deeply state exactly how the sport discussion network egos are more constrained than the sport crisis discussion network egos by their alters, but these findings become clearer in subsequent analyses presented later in this chapter.

Table 5.3. *Structural Holes Statistics for Talking About Sport*

	SP	SC
Degree	4.65	2.43
Density	0.45	0.40
Effective Size	3.90	1.89
Efficiency	0.83	0.56
Constraint	0.52	0.42
Hierarchy	0.09	0.12

APPENDIX F – MULTILEVEL MODEL REGRESSION ANALYSES

Multilevel models for assessment of cross-level random intercepts to examine egocentric network tie activation. Multilevel models (MLM) are a necessary analytic process for ego network data for protection of the integrity of the data because of its two-level nature (i.e. egos and their nested alters). MLM was discussed in more detail in the literature review noting its ability to keep intact multi-theoretical research designs (Monge & Contractor, 2003), and in the method section to explain the need for cross-level examination of this dissertation's data (Bush et al., 2017; Perry & Pescosolido, 2015). To answer $RQ5_b$ and H4-6, a series of MLM analyses were conducted. The MLMs examined the likelihood of each measured variable to activate ties within the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network, respectively. In other words, the attribute, relational, and tie composition were all analyzed to some degree in the MLMs conducted in this section.

Traditional regression analyses, while appropriate for analyzing dependent variables related solely to the ego at level-two (and utilized later to answer $RQ5_c$), is not appropriate for analysis of activated ties or alter-level attributes that are level-one dependent variables in egocentric research (Perry et al., 2018). To explain, use of a traditional linear regression to analyze activated ties or alter-level data would violate several assumptions. These violations are rooted in the fact that linear regression would aggregate all of the two-level nested data to only the ego level and therefore not consider differences between each ego and his/her respective alters. The aggregation of the data would also violate the egocentric assumption that each ego's alters were specifically chosen for functional purposes (Perry & Pescosolido, 2010).

To offer an example, the name generator in the sport discussion network asked each ego to list alters who are fellow fans of their own favorite NFL team. Conducting a linear regression

on an activated fan behavior tie in the sport discussion network would assume no differences exist among all 987 egos and their 3,848 alters for listing the same favorite team. This dataset features egos who reported one of 32 NFL teams and each of those egos reported a diverse mix of sport discussants—some fellow fans and others not (in fact, an average of about half fellow fans and half fans of other teams). MLM analysis would allow for the accounting of ego 1's favorite team being the Dallas Cowboys and that ego listing fellow Dallas Cowboys fans, and ego 2's favorite team being the New England Patriots and listing alters who are fellow Patriots fans, and so on. MLM, as a random intercepts model, therefore does not assume overlap of ego 1's Cowboys fan alters with ego 2's Patriots fans alters while still conducting a cross-level regression analysis (de Miguel Luken & Tranmer, 2010; Snijders, Spreen, & Zwaagstra, 1995).

As aforementioned, MLM analyses are conducted on dependent variables that are a function of the relationship between an ego and his/her alters (Snijders et al., 1995). The MLM model (with one independent variable) is explained by the following formula: $y_{ij} = \beta_0 + = \beta_1 x_{ij} + \zeta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$ where "*i"* represents level one alters, and "*j"* represents level two egos (Perry et al., 2018). According to Perry et al (2018) this model extends the single random residual results from a linear regression with two random residual components—each ego's random intercept and their alters' residual—allowing for cross-level variance to be calculated. MLM, as a random intercepts model uses the mean of all means, and not the grand mean, so MLM assesses the mean of each ego's alters for the variable(s) measured at level-one *and* the mean of all egos at level-two, but not the grand mean of both levels clumped together. This aids in accounting for all alters nested within each ego in egocentric networks.

The MLMs are reported much in the same manner as past egocentric studies have reported results (Bello & Rolfe, 2014; Perry & Pescosolido, 2010; Snijders et al., 1995). For

example, each random intercepts model offers two types of variance as a result: the *residual*, which is the within-ego, between-alter variance; and the *intercept*, which equals the between-ego variance. The total variance is then calculated to offer the percent of variance that is left unexplained by the model's independent variables. This measurement is called the intraclass correlation (ICC) or *rho*. Also, deviance is calculated from the null model and consecutive models by subtracting the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) from the first test of the null and the final model of analysis. BIC is assessed in an effort to examine best model fit. The lower the BIC, the stronger or better fitting the model.

So, to offer a demonstration of the MLM process, a review for an analysis of the schadenfreude tie activation analysis is explained here: We have some egos activating schadenfreude with their alters above the regression line and some activating schadenfreude below the line. MLM helps to decipher the likelihood of select ego and alter attributes that are deciphering such placement of tie activation. MLM allows cross level examinations so, for example, we can analyze the age and gender of an ego and of an alter, or how an ego's level of fanship, plus their perception of their alters' level of being a sport fan, varies among the activation of schadenfreude in response to sport crises. MLM allows such exploration of level-one variance plus level-two variance, separately, and allows for calculation of *all* variance; something network scholars refer to as "within-cluster correlation" (Perry et al., 2018, p. 211).

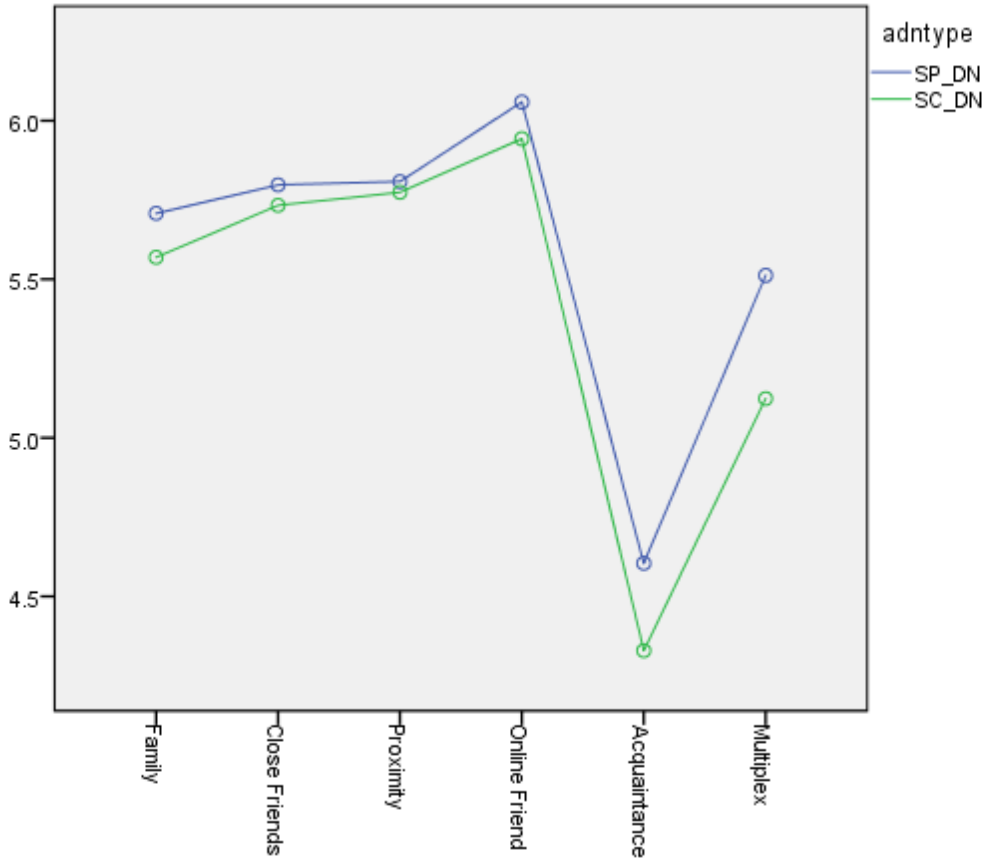
The first step in MLM is to test the null. If model significance rejects the null ($p < .05$), MLM is a more appropriate analysis than linear regression. Testing the null for schadenfreude in the sport crisis discussion network resulted in $p < .001$. The BIC is 6502.13. The ICC for schadenfreude is 93%. When the model is run a second time adding ego age (a level-two variable) and alter gender (a level-one variable), the BIC is reduced to 5507.69 (a change of -

994.44) which is a better model fit than the null. Alter gender is not significant but ego age presents a significant likelihood in schadenfreude activation in this model. Overall unexplained variance has been reduced to 92% after adding the two independent variables.

A series of MLMs were conducted to explore which attribute and relational factors of egos and their respective alters contribute to the activation of fan behaviors in the sport discussion network and the sport crisis discussion network. The models examine the restricted maximum likelihood (REML) of the independent variables to elicit change in the dependent variable (Snijders, et al., 1995). Results are discussed next, and each discussion network's MLM tables, presented in the same format as prior egocentric studies (Bello & Rolfe, 2014: Perry & Pescosolido, 2010; Snijders et al., 1995), all of which can be located in the appendices. Reporting of estimated variance for parameter coefficients (*b*) and significance (*p*-value) for independent variables of note, also mimic other egocentric studies (Perry et al., 2018; Song, 2018).

APPENDIX G – FIGURES

Figure 4.1. *Alter Fan Levels by Relation, Role, and Discussion Network*



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